CATHALINA at GREYCLIFF

HARRIET PYNE GROVE

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1800

Cathalina carefully turned the boat and started shoreward. Lilian, who had her guitar, strummed a few chords.

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CATHALINA AT GREYCLIFF

By HARRIET PYNE GROVE

Author of

"The Girls of Greycliff," "The Greycliff Girls in Camp," "Greycliff Heroines," "Greycliff Wings."

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THE GREYCLIFF GIRLS SERIES

A Series of Stories for Girls

By HARRIET PYNE GROVE

CATHALINA AT GREYCLIFF
THE GIRLS OF GREYCLIFF
THE GREYCLIFF GIRLS IN CAMP
GREYCLIFF HEROINES
GREYCLIFF WINGS

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CATHALINA AT GREYCLIFF

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FOREWORD

In these chapters the author has used her own family names, to which she fancies she has a right. There are, however, some changes; it was, for instance, a Katherine Knickerbocker who married a Van Buskirk. The "Aunt Katherine" of the story is really the author's grandmother, Harriet Cathalina Van Buskirk, a granddaughter of the original Martin Van Buskirk. She taught in the Emma Willard school at Troy, New York, and married William Lee, nephew of Madam Willard and son of her oldest sister, Mary Hart.

To present a happy, normal school life and real girls in the midst of life's most delightful opportunities is the object of this series.

CATHALINA AT GREYCLIFF

CHAPTER I.

CATHALINA VAN BUSKIRK.

THE maid was doing Cathalina Van Buskirk's sunny brown hair.

"Do it up high, Etta; it is so hot today! I hope Mother will decide to go to the mountains soon!"

"Just as soon as your brother comes home, Miss Cathalina. I heard her say so yesterday."

"Last year he met us there!" Cathalina replied, somewhat fretfully.

"Yes, but he is not going back next Fall, you know, and there's all his things to come here. And then your mother said that she isn't sure where she will go until she sees him and finds out what he needs and where he wants to go."

"O, Phil's always well,—I wish I were!" Cathalina looked mournfully and pityingly in the mirror, where she saw a pretty, delicate face with shadowy,

dark blue eyes. A tear threatened to splash over as Cathalina thought what a dull, disagreeable world it was. A miserable piano lesson at ten o'clock, and she supposed she'd have to practice a while before; a party the next day, or was it this afternoon?—and the girls would be offended if she did not go. Always the same old thing anyhow!

Etta quietly took the blue silk kimono that Cathalina had slipped off and brought in exchange a dainty morning dress of fine, sheer lawn.

Cathalina's bedroom was a beautiful setting for the fair little maid of fourteen years. When the new home was being finished a year before, Cathalina herself, with some direction from her mother, had chosen the blue, white and silver decorations and selected the furnishings. What pride she had taken at first in the delicate effects, the simple, though expensive, fittings. But she was tired of it all now.

As Etta fastened the dress, Cathalina said, with the shy little smile that she always had when she spoke intimately, "I was so cross, Etta, this morning when you brought up my breakfast,—please forgive me!"

"O, Miss Cathie,—if you call that cross! What would you think if you heard what I've had to put up with?"

"Better not tell me, Etta," replied Cathalina, who had been taught not to encourage tales of former

service. "I might get hints on how to manage you," she added, with a laugh. "How loose this dress is getting! Just pin over the girdle a little—or get me that other sash that matches, please." Then both girls turned to listen to sounds of commotion down stairs.

"What is that? Hurry, Etta,—I do believe it's Phil! Yes, I hear his voice!"

Gone was Cathalina's languor. She ran to the door, stood a moment by the bannister, looking over, then flew down the broad stairs as fast as a pair of twinkling feet could carry her.

"O, Phil!"

"Hullo, Kathleen Mavourneen!" And a tall, slim youngster who stood in the hall turned and caught the flying figure on the last stair. He gave her a whirl and then held her off after a brotherly hug. "Why, what's the matter with you, kitten?" for Cathalina was sobbing a little.

"I don't know—just so glad to see you—I cry at everything lately."

"Well, come now!" Philip boyishly patted her shoulder. "Come on, let's find Mothery. O, *Mother!*"

"Is that my boy?" Another graceful figure came down stairs, not quite so fast, but with face eager and smiling. Philip embraced his mother and tipped up her chin that he might get a good look, with

"How's Madam Sylvia Van Ness Van Buskirk?"

"Beautiful as a dream," answered Cathalina, who had recovered from her tears and was almost feeling frisky, inspired by Philip's arrival.

"She actually blushes!" laughed Philip. "Now if it were Dad! Still the same pair of lovers, Mothery?"

"Nonsense, Philip. How good it is to have you again! How did you happen to come so unexpectedly?"

"I was all through, lessons and quizzes, and took a notion to come. Packed in an awful hurry and forgot to telegraph. The bunch was along. But let me clean up, Mother, before I answer questions,—I'm so dingy and hot! You see I'm here, husky as ever, and wasn't fired! Home looks pretty good to me!"

"Very well, saucy boy!" Sylvia Van Buskirk shook her head, in smiling reproof of her son, who turned to give direction to the butler standing near, unhearing, unseeing, a suit-case in each hand. "There'll be a big bag, a couple of trunks and some boxes of books later, Watts. Don't know where I did get all the junk. Have Louis bring up the suit-cases right away. And how are you yourself?"

"Watts'" dignity gave way to a warm smile, for all the servants liked Philip Junior, or "Mr. Philip",

as they called him. Three or four at a time, Philip took the low steps, whistling as he went.

"Handsome and full of fun as ever!"

"Now we'll have a little life in the house!"

So exclaimed Cathalina and her mother together.

"How are you this morning, Cathalina?"

"O, I was simply cross when I waked up with a headache again, but it was gone after breakfast."

Mrs. Van Buskirk's brow contracted anxiously as she looked at Cathalina. Then, arm in arm, they crossed the hall and entered the library, where shades and shutters kept out the glare of the morning sun, an electric fan supplied a breeze and the mail lay upon the table.

The Van Buskirk library was what Philip Junior called it, "a thing of beauty" and "a joy forever". Philip Van Buskirk Senior was a merchant and importer who dealt in all things beautiful of a material sort. Books were his recreation; and as the producing world brought him silks, ivories, jewels and quaint treasures of all kinds, so this world of books brought riches of thought and a quiet companionship away from business cares. The low shelves in the alcoves were filled with reference books galore, with the standard literature and, best of all, the precious copies of the authors dear to the fine man who selected, read and put them upon his

shelves, according to his own fancy of arrangement.

Here, in the broad, well-cushioned window seat, Cathalina loved to curl up with a box of candy and a book or favorite magazine. No wonder that meals did not taste well and that there was a headache in the morning!

This morning's headache, however, could not be charged to candy, for of late that had been forbidden. Some months before this June morning, Cathalina had been seriously ill. Under careful watching and with a return to the program of more childish days, she had been coming slowly back to health and had even taken up a few studies again. But she had no real interest in anything and in spite of a disposition naturally sweet, bid fair to become fretful and spoiled.

The Van Buskirks were wealthy, enjoying the usual luxuries that money can buy. To a certain extent and among their special friends they entertained, but were not given to display. In the midst of the activities that modern life almost thrusts upon men and women of means, they kept as far as possible to the family traditions and domestic realities. Sylvia was one of several sisters noted for their grace and charm; and when Philip Van Buskirk, young, handsome, somewhat timid in these days, first saw Sylvia Van Ness and met a glance from

her grave, sympathetic eyes, his choice was made. A wholesome family life, consideration for others, great interest in their children, soft-voiced women and quiet, efficient men were characteristic of these people and their friends.

After finishing her own letters, Cathalina sat quietly and watched her mother as she rapidly read one after another. Mrs. Van Buskirk's dark hair, perfectly arranged, made a frame for her sweet, thoughtful face. Little rings of hair, curling from the moist heat, strayed about her brow and ears. "Such a pretty mother," said Cathalina, reaching over to pat the slender hand resting on the table. Her mother drew Cathalina's fingers within her own and read on down the last page of the last letter.

Cathalina had always wanted to look like her mother. Often as a little child she had stood before the mirror, anxiously looking to see if her hair were not a trifle darker, her nose a trifle longer! Some one had mentioned pug noses with scorn. Could it be that hers was one? For several months she worried over the matter, until one day one of her aunts had said, "I think Cathalina is going to have the Van Buskirk nose." That was anything but a pug, she knew, and then she feared that she might have a nose as long as Uncle Martin Van Buskirk's, —which would never do on a girl! Alas the secret fears of childhood, so real, yet so easily forgotten.

"Well, Cathalina, have you any news?"

Cathalina handed her mother an open letter, asking in her turn, "Anything important in your mail?"

"Three requests for money, a funny letter of thanks from your old Irish admirer, Mrs. Sullivan,—look at it;—a letter from our secretary of foreign missions and a note from Aunt Katherine, saying that she will be over some time after lunch. It must have been left by the chauffeur, as there is no sign of it's having been through the mails. It should have been brought directly to me."

"Why didn't she telephone?"

"She is sending this catalogue for us to look over. Part of her note is about you. How would you like to go to a school like this?" and Mrs. Van Buskirk pushed across the table the neat catalogue of a girls' school.

Cathalina picked it up without much interest, turning the pages carelessly to look at pictures of fine buildings, beautiful grounds, and girls playing tennis, rowing, or winding in pretty May Day pageant.

"Mercy!" she exclaimed. "It makes me tired just to look at it! I like to read, but I just hate to really study hard! And if I go rowing I'd rather have some nice young man do the work!"

Mrs. Van Buskirk compressed her lips and gave Cathalina a searching look. "Why, my child, that

does not sound like you! And since when have you grown sentimental?"

"O, I don't mean anything silly, Mother, but you get so hot rowing! I'm not athletic, like that horrid Gladys Morrow that ran around with Ann Maria last summer."

"I wish you had her health," said Mrs. Van Buskirk.

"And her manners?"

Mrs. Van Buskiark only smiled wisely and drew the telephone apparatus toward her. "I must telephone to Aunt Katharine now."

"Just a moment, Mother. Do you care if I telephone to Professor Glenn not to come this morning? It is so hot and I want to see Phil. Then we'll be going away pretty soon anyway, won't we? I haven't practiced much and I don't like the things he gives me. I don't like him very well either."

"What a list of excuses!" Mrs. Van Buskirk paused to consider. "If you are feeling ill, Cathalina, I will telephone to him myself. But it hardly seems courteous to be so irregular in the work, to say nothing of your own good. I think we might let the lessons go on until we go away."

"O, dear!" sighed Cathalina.

"I must talk to your father about it, then."

"He will only say for you to 'follow your own judgment'."

Mrs. Van Buskirk laughed. "Well, I'll think about it and see your teacher when he comes this morning. Remember that it is bread and butter to him."

Cathalina puckered up her face at the prospect of the coming lesson, but seeing her mother's disturbed look, she said, "All right, Mamma, I'll try to be decent!" With her fingers she pretended to smooth out the frown and turn up the corners of her mouth. "Here is Philly's happy grin! Is that all right?"

But her mother had called Mrs. Knickerbocker's telephone number and only gave Cathalina a kindly smile.

"Is this Mrs. Knickerbocker's residence? Yes;—O, is this Aunt Katherine? This is Sylvia. I have just received your note. Yes; I see. By some mistake it was put with the mail. I am quite interested in your ideas. No, I have not had time to look it over carefully, but will do so. Cathalina is looking at it now. I hardly know. She does not seem to be exactly wild at the prospect." Mrs. Van Buskirk's eyes wandered to Cathalina, who was languidly turning the pages of the catalogue again.

"We must talk it over. Are any of Cathalina's friends going there? Not a soul? Well! What I want to suggest, Aunt Katherine, is that you all come over to dinner tonight. 'Little Phil' came home unexpectedly about half an hour ago. No,

nothing wrong, finished his examinations and did not care, I suppose, to stay through the Commencement exercises. I've hardly seen him yet; he went right to his room for clean attire. O, is Uncle away? I'm sorry. But bring Ann Maria, anyway. Goodbye. Yes, thank you, goodbye."

CHAPTER II.

'AUNT KATHERINE GIVES ADVICE.

THE Van Buskirk dinner hour was approaching. After a heavy thunder storm with hail, a cool breeze freshened the hot city. The dainty lace curtains in the drawing room were blowing dangerously for their gossamer threads. But Sylvia Van Buskirk let them blow while she threw open every one of the long French windows which opened on the veranda. Its stone floor was covered with rose petals and leaves from the vines that twined around the great pillars. "What a storm it was!" she was thinking as she looked out. An easy chair was drawn near one of the windows and she was looking about for the evening paper when Mr. Van Buskirk appeared in evening dress. Some little services for her husband Sylvia kept as her own. It was not one of those houses in which the servants are always in evidence.

Mr. Van Buskirk came smiling toward his wife and putting his arm around her drew her to the window, while he, too, looked out upon the results

of the storm. Philip Van Buskirk Senior was a little above average height, well built but not heavy. He did not possess the dark eyes which were characteristic of so many of the Van Buskirks, but blue ones of the unfading blue type, passed on to Cathalina. His hair was beginning to show grey threads, but he looked active and well, and his air was that of the well-poised, successful business man who is accustomed to carry responsibility. His face was rather serious, refined, and just now very tender; for dear as his children were to him, Sylvia had always stood first.

"As soon as you have rested a little, I would like to talk with you about an important matter."

"I am rested now. Bath, shave and clean clothes always rest a man, that is,—well, do not expect me to do any talking. I've been closeted, at different times today, with half a dozen men,—each one trying to put through some scheme."

"Poor boy! This is a scheme of Aunt Katherine's, but for our good, not hers, and especially for Cathalina's benefit. If my experience with Cathalina today is at all suggestive, Auntie's idea isn't bad."

Instead of taking chair and paper, then, Mr. Van Buskirk stretched out upon a couch not far from the windows, and while he closed his eyes and held his wife's hand as if her nearness rested him, Sylvia

outlined Aunt Katherine's plan for sending Cathalina to a girls' school.

They had not talked long when the children appeared. Philip at seventeen was already taller than his father. Slender, dark-eyed, his dark brown hair cut in the latest fashion, he looked quite the dandy in his evening clothes. Cathalina, dressed as a little girl rather than a young lady, wore a lacy white frock, simple and pretty.

"There is your Aunt Knickerbocker, I think," said Philip Senior, rising quickly as the bell rang. "Go to meet her yourself, Phil; she'll appreciate the attention." But Philip had already started to the hall.

"Home again, my dear boy!" was Aunt Katherine's brisk greeting. Philip welcomed her warmly and started to unfasten the wrap which she had worn in the machine.

"You are an improvement on the maid, Philip, and much better looking. No, I'll not go upstairs, thank you," and turning, Aunt Katherine stood a moment before a mirror in the hall, put back a wisp or two of silvery hair, patted her white laces and shook out the folds of her clinging black silk draperies. A maid who had just appeared in answer to Philip's summons, waited a moment in the background, then vanished as Mrs. Knickerbocker en-

tered the room and greeted her advancing host and hostess.

Tall and erect was Aunt Katherine, with well cut features, mouth a little wide, perhaps, nose a trifle long, but well shaped. Nothing could look more uncompromising than that straight, Van Buskirk back; nothing could be more cutting on occasion than a few of her quiet, well directed remarks. But no one in the connection was more respected and generally beloved for her wisdom, good, common sense and real, unselfish kindness.

She put an arm around Cathalina and as Phil had done in the morning, turned up the delicate face to look at it. Soft lights by this time had been turned on, and shone through Cathalina's hair, making a sort of halo around her face. Her eyes, however, twinkled up into Aunt Katherine's with a glance more human than angelic.

"Nice little girl," said Mrs. Knickerbocker, kissing Kathalina's forehead and turning away to accept the comfortable wicker chair just placed for her by the elder Philip.

"Where is Ann Maria?" asked Sylvia.

"She telephoned from Libbie's that they are keeping her there for dinner and want Philip and Cathalina to come over as soon as possible. Elizabeth said that she would have liked them both for dinner, but would not expect you to give Philip up to-

night. Louise came home yesterday. John passed his examination for the bar, as we knew, of course, he would. His Western trip, too, promises much But Libbie can't bear to think of his settling so far away. I judge that nobody but Juliet will see much of him for a while,—his sweetheart, Philip. Will's knee is better and they think that no serious trouble will result. Charlotte is much better,—hives—and they are all spoiling her as usual, so Libbie says."

Aunt Katherine herself smiled over her own varied budget of news from Elizabeth Van Ness, often known as "Cousin Libbie", whose pleasant home was in a suburb near. Cathalina and her mother had drawn their chairs near Mrs. Knickerbocker, while Philip and his father drifted into a little conversation of their own, as Philip recounted recent events at the military school from which he had just returned.

Philip was not the too common prodigal son of a rich man. His father, fond and proud of his son and heir, had studied the boy, taking him into his confidence, and had interested him at first in the more romantic side of his business by stories about the different products and producers. Later Philip was given the opportunity to study different departments and even entrusted with a little responsibility. An allowance, small at first and increasing with the years, was made, and within this he was supposed

to bring his personal expenses. To Mr. Van Buskirk's great satisfaction, Philip was responding to this effort to fit him for responsibility, and as he went about with his father he was unconsciously absorbing much and learning to distinguish the true from the false and the honorable from the dishonorable.

"Before you go, Philip," said Aunt Katherine after dinner, "may I have some music?"

"Certainly," replied Philip promptly, seating himself at the piano. What will you have, Auntie? College songs and ragtime are not in your line, are they?"

It was a pretty picture,—the beautiful room, the dark, rich wood of the piano, Philip's glowing face and Cathalina's smiling one, looking over the piano at her brother.

A sparkling, indefinite prelude passed gradually into a dreamy theme that suited the relaxed mood of the family. Then followed several well-known classics till Philip rose suddenly and with one hand on his heart bowed low in exaggerated concert style to Aunt Katherine, who laughed and tossed him a crimson rose with which she had been playing.

"What was that pretty thing you played first,—after your preliminaries?" she asked, as Philip sat down again and began to turn the pages of a collection of songs which Cathalina handed him.

"Something by a new composer, I believe, Auntie," replied Philip with a wink at Cathalina. "I couldn't tell you the name of it."

Cathalina could not conceal her amusement and Aunt Katherine quickly exclaimed, "I knew it! You did it yourself! It was lovely. You play with much expression, Philip, a great gift in these degenerate days!"

"Really, Aunt Katherine, if the children are going to Libbie's, we shall have to cut short the music. College songs another time, Cathalina. I'm sorry." Philip began to whistle softly a phrase of "Who is Sylvia," as Cathalina hurried off to get ready.

In the hall Watts at the telephone looked around to say, "Tire is off the touring car, sir; can have the electric at the door in a few minutes."

"All right,—nobody but Cathalina and me, and Ann Maria coming back."

At the top of the steps Cathalina gave a little skip. "O, Phil, this is almost jolly, isn't it? I'm so glad you and the girls are back!"

"I like that 'almost'!" Philip took her arm down the steps and put her carefully into the car.

"Are you glad to be home?"

"Glad!—you don't know how awful it is sometimes,—and then again, it's jolly fun," Philip smiled at the remembrance of certain pranks.

"You're awfully nice to me," continued Cathalina,

"just as nice as you are to Louise or Ann Maria. Rosalie Haverhill said that her brother didn't pay any attention to her after he had been away to school."

Philip was still at the stage when he preferred to avoid the expression of sentiment, though possessing his share. "O, you're a good old scout, Kit, that's the reason."

It was not a long ride to the Van Ness place, where a roomful of cousins awaited them. Cousin Elizabeth herself, sweet and hospitable, met them at the door.

"O, Ann Maria!—Emily Stuart, is this really you? and is Campbell—O, there he is!" Cathalina was quite animated for a little while, as she greeted the cousins.

Ann Maria Van Ness was an orphan, grandniece of Aunt Knickerbocker, and lived with them, Emily, Campbell and Sara Stuart were the children of one of Philip Van Buskirk's sisters. Campbell was about the age of Philip Junior; Emily scarcely a year older; Sarah, a little girl of ten years. Emily and Louise Van Ness, who was Cousin Elizabeth's oldest daughter, had returned from boarding school Ann Maria attended the same school, but had returned earlier. She was almost as tall as Phil, an athletic girl, with good features and an alert, vivacious manner. Her "chum cousin" was Louise, who

was short, plump, fair-haired and blue-eyed, with charming dimples in her round cheeks. Ann, or "Nan", Van Ness disowned the name of Nancy, but consented to be called Nan that she might be distinguished from her cousin Ann Maria. Nan and Cathalina were of nearly the same age.

The eldest son of the family was not there, "making a call", said his father with a twinkle in answer to Philip's inquiry. Will, a youngster of some eleven years, who was hobbling around with one crutch, noisily claimed Philip's attention.

"How'd you get your game knee, Will?"

"O,—playin' baseball; fell."

"Am, too, goin' to see Philly!" came in shrill tones from the hall, before the family were well settled down for a visit.

"O, Mother, Charlotte is making trouble with Nina. You'll have to settle her."

"Let her come in a minute. I don't care for once. She had a long nap this afternoon and I don't blame her for not wanting to go to bed. It was a shame to send her off when she knew that Philip and Cathalina were coming."

"She adores Philip," said Louise.

"Behold Mother's discipline," remarked Nan wisely.

Small, fat, curly-haired, almost a tiny edition of Louise, little Charlotte appeared in the door, having

escaped her nurse. Eluding several outstretched hands, she dashed across the room and with some assistance perched upon Philip's knee.

Philip placed her firmly and began to recite "There was an old woman as I've heard tell."

Charlotte chuckled and poked his face with her chubby fingers.

"Now, fee b'ind mice."

"I don't know that one, do I?" asked Philip, teasing.

"Why, yes you do! Don't you know?—'Fee b'ind mice, See how ay wun!"

"I don't think I can remember it unless you tell me first what your name is."

"Sh'lotte Mee-ni-a Buckets V'n Hoosen Doosen V'n Ness."

A ripple of laughter greeted this, Will adding a boyish "haw-haw!"

"Philip Van Buskirk, did you teach her that?" came from Mrs. Van Ness.

Philip grinned broadly. "I really didn't think she'd remember. Smart child!"

"Why, Charlotte, your name isn't Maria; here's 'Ann Maria."

"Yes, 'tis Meenia. Philip said," insisted Charlotte, nodding her curls.

"Ah, Phil, now she's let the cat out of the bag."

"Kitty, kitty," called Philip softly.

Charlotte jumped down and looked all round. "Why where's a kitty? Don't see any kitty!"

"What does she mean by 'Buckets', Philip?"

"Van Buskirk," replied Philip, arching his black brows and drawing his face into a comical look of pretended distress.

"Come on, Phil, play for us," said Ann Maria. "Louise has some new music."

"Good; let Louise do it."

"You first, my dear Philip!"

"O, start the victrola, girls!"

"Philip Van Buskirk! Do you mean to say that you will take piano and organ all year of the perfectly fine professor down there and not play a note for your suffering family?"

So Philip was escorted to the piano by Ann Maria and Louise, and played for this family group as he had played for Aunt Katherine.

Ann Maria looked questioningly at Cathalina as Philip played his own exquisite little theme, and receiving a confirming nod, looked mischievous, but remained silent like the rest until Philip had finished.

"What was that second thing you played, Phil?—I can't think what it is, someway, but it sounds like—" Ann Maria paused as if trying to think of the name of a composition.

"What does it sound like?" demanded Philip,

whirling around. Then he caught the look in Ann Maria's eyes.

"O, you Maria," said he slangily, shaking his head at her and dashing into popular songs in which the cousins joined.

"What is it?" asked Louise, who did not understand.

"O, just Ann Maria, as usual, teasing Philly about the piece he made up," replied Cathalina.

* * * * *

Meanwhile Aunt Katherine was leading the discussion at the Van Buskirk's.

"I have not wanted to intrude, Philip, but it has seemed to me for some time that our very anxiety for Cathalina is spoiling her."

"Why, Aunt Katherine!" exclaimed Sylvia in gentle protest, "Cathalina is usually as sweet as can be."

"I do not mean spoiled in the sense of becoming undutiful or exacting. No child of yours, Sylvia, could be anything but sweet." Aunt Katherine, though never insincere, knew when to put in a judicious compliment. Philip Junior, however, would not have thanked her for his share in this one.

"Why, thank you, Auntie; I'm afraid I do not deserve that."

"Yes, you do; but, my dear, do you realize that the child does almost nothing for herself? No wonder that she is anaemic and lacks energy! There

is no real wholesome exercise that she wants to take. Isn't that true?"

Mr. and Mrs. Van Buskirk were both very sober. "A maid dresses her, picks up after her and brings her meals when she is either too miserable or too lazy to go down to the dining room. The child reads, draws and paints a little and rides around in the car to shop. She has practically no young companions except her cousins,—though in some respects that is just as well here."

"When I suggested tennis or riding or swimming lessons, she just begged me not to make her," said Sylvia, "and I knew she was not fit for any real strain."

"O, it is always 'lessons', in this, that or the other," laughed Aunt Katherine. "I don't know that I blame her. Perhaps you can get her to swim if you are on the coast this summer. But I have been observing that aside from her health you have a real problem to solve. I rather particularly love Cathalina,—and when I received the letter from my old friend, Ellen Randolph, with the catalogue I sent you this morning, it occurred to me that perhaps a complete change would rouse Cathalina. If she could see, for instance, that most girls do without many of the luxuries which she takes for granted, it would do her good. She has had private teaching enough, in my opinion."

"But why not send her then to Aunt Willard's school, where we all have gone? Troy is so near."

"Well, you know I think everything of that and remember Madam Willard herself, but this is a different case. Cathalina needs to go farther away from home and away from her cousins. She needs to be on her own resources."

"She is pretty young for that," said Mr. Van Buskirk, doubtfully. "I prefer to protect her from some things."

"Ellen will look after her so far as she needs any real care or sympathy. And traveling expenses mean nothing to you as they do some people. You can reach the place in a comparatively short time."

"There is splendid sense in what you say, Aunt Katherine, and we will think it over carefully."

"I will write to Ellen and tell her to send you all the information they send out."

"How can I spare the child!" exclaimed Sylvia.

"But her welfare? No one must grow up too dependent. There will be all kinds of gymnastic exercises and sports and girls to whom she will be as strange as they to her. I count on her pride and the "Van Buskirk grit" to make her want to be on an equality with the rest. She will be without a maid, and I hope it need not be known that she has one and everything else she wants!"

"It would not be like Cathalina to plume herself upon advantages."

"No," put in Mr. Van Buskirk, "but those things usually leak out."

"Yes," said Aunt Katherine," but not, I hope until the poor child has had a fair start."

CHAPTER III.

HILARY LANCASTER.

WHILE Cathalina Van Buskirk's aunt was making suggestions, another aunt, in a different way was shaping the destiny of another young girl, Hilary Lancaster.

It was an early morning of the first week in June. Mrs. Lancaster always found it wise to rise with the lark and accomplish what she could before the door bell and telephone began for the day. This morning the grocery list was made out, the breakfast cooking, the vegetables partly prepared for the noon dinner, a blouse cut out for Tommy, and the porches fresh from the hose. Hilary, too, had risen early to work a hard problem, and it was she who had turned the hose on the porches.

"Call your father now, Hilary, please, and tell him that breakfast is nearly ready. I will see about the boys presently. They are up but I must see that Gordon puts on a clean collar. Is Mary awake?"

"Yes; I'll dress her as soon as I call Father. June is all ready and studying her history.

It was a minister's busy household. In due season, the breakfast over, Hilary and June had washed the dishes and with the boys were off to school. Mary was well established with her family of battered dolls under the apple tree near the kitchen door. Mrs. Lancaster had commenced to iron when the mail carrier arrived and Dr. Lancaster presently appeared, by way of the dining room door, to hand her a letter.

"You are tired already, Grace," said Dr. Lancaster. "You know I can't bear to have you do this."

"I'll not, reverend sir, as soon as we catch up a little; and anyway it is so hard to find anybody. My woman does the washing well, but I tried her on the ironing and it was hopeless! The children have so many starched things, too, this hot weather, and they have to look well in school."

"All the more reason, then, for having some help."

"School is almost out and then Hilary and June will be able to help me more."

Dr. Lancaster sighed and went back to his study, where much work of a different sort was waiting him. In a few minutes, Mrs. Lancaster with her open letter slipped to the study door, peeped in to see if her husband were writing and under the influence of the divine afflatus; but finding that he was

still reading the morning paper, she went in to share the news of her rather amazing message.

"Read this, dear, and tell me if I am dreaming."

Dr. Lancaster looked inquiringly at his wife, laid down the paper, took the letter and began to read it aloud.

My dear Grace:

It is at least three weeks, I know, since I wrote. But you can imagine how much there was to do and how sad it all was. I will write about it in detail later, but I have a special purpose in this letter.

Although Horace was Mother Garland's only child and although she and I have lived together for so long, still it never occurred to me that she would leave the bulk of the property to me. That was one surprise, and another was that there is so much of it. Mother lived so simply and we never knew until after her death how many people and causes she had helped. She wrote me a beautiful letter, found with her will and other papers, and told me to accept it all with her love and to take the rest and travel I would need. Her home is to go to an old friend, so that relieves me of much care here, and I shall make headquarters at my own lovely place, as soon as my tenant's lease expires. For the summer I shall go to the lake as usual, and may have a new cottage built.

Now for the important plan I have to suggest. After I returned home from my last delightful visit with you all, it came over me how much all of us, from little Mary to your husband, depended upon our Hilary. Think it over and see if it isn't so. Hilary is so full of life and vim and is so unusually capable in anything she undertakes that if we are not careful she may use up some of that vital force too early. O, I know we grow by activity and all that,—but what would you think of a change for Hilary from home and high school to a girls' school, for her last two years before college? I gathered from what you and Max said that you are planning to send her to college; and even then I was hoping to have a share in that. And now, if you are willing, I can do much more for my little namesake.

If on thinking over my suggestion, you are agreed, I will send you a draft for a thousand dollars. As nearly as I can find out, five hundred will take a girl through a school such as we should choose for Hilary in comfort, if not in luxury. But if it takes more, you can begin on the second five hundred and I will make up the difference when the time comes.

I hope Max will let me do this. It will be such a pleasure. I can not tell you how proud I am of Hilary, the dear, bright child! Please decide soon, and if favorably we can send for catalogues and

have all sorts of nice times getting her ready to go. Applications ought to be in early at any school. I know pretty well what Hilary likes, so I am going to begin picking up pretty things for her outfit.

If Hilary does not like the plan,—well, no "ifs", —I shall be anxiously waiting your decision.

Lovingly your sister,

HILARY GARLAND.

Dr. Lancaster put down the letter and looked at his wife. "What do you think of it?"

"I scarcely know. I was afraid you might feel a little annoyed, yet Hilary Senior is always just so enthusiastic over what she wants to do for her namesake."

"No; I understand your sister. Her motives are of the best. We shall only consider what is best for the child."

At noon Hilary telephoned that she would not be home, for "they" were practicing the Commencement music and one of the girls whose accompaniment she was to play lived near the school building and had invited her there for lunch.

At the Lancaster's supper hour Hilary had not arrived, but came in before the family had left the table. "Excuse me, folks," she said, as she sat down, unfolded her napkin, and leaned back in her chair in an attitude of pretended collapse.

"All in?" asked Gordon.

"She's all in and down and out," put in Tommy, delighted to try the slang at home.

Dr. Lancaster looked at his wife and said: "Tell us what you have been doing today, Hilary."

"The usual things, of course, at school. Then we practiced the Commencement music at noon and again after school. On the way home, Miss Bird stopped me first to see if I would take charge of the King's Heralds for a few meetings,—she is going away for a vacation. Next, Jim Randall called across the street that I would have to lead League next Sunday. One of the leaders has gone away and they have to move the program up, the Leaders, I mean. Then Myrtle came along and told me that the Sunday-school orchestra meets tonight, here if we can have it."

"Take them over to the church, Hilary; the official board meets here," said Dr. Lancaster.

"And when I was about half way home Miss Brown stopped me to give me back some themes,—said they were good—and while she was talking who should come along but Professor Morton, wanting somebody to fill a gap in the choir Sunday."

"Going to do it all?" asked Tommy.

"O, yes, I couldn't think of any excuse.

"And examinations coming on," suggested her father.

"O, no; I get out of them all. You always do if your grades are high enough."

At this remark Tommy grew very red, but kept quite still, while Gordon winked at June. Poor Tommy was the only one of the children not excused from examination, and while his grades were not low, he felt much disgraced. Another year would probably find young Thomas taking his studies more seriously.

"And what do you do after orchestra practice tonight?" inquired Dr. Lancaster.

"Well, I get my last Caesar lesson,—hurrah!—and I thought I might begin to copy your article for you, Father, unless Mother wants me to do something else."

"No typewriting tonight, daughter, both for your sake and that of the official board."

"Eat your supper, dear child," said Mrs. Lancaster. "Aren't these the finest strawberries? Mr. Short brought them in from the country this morning,—his choicest berries!"

"Sometimes it does pay to be the minister's family, doesn't it?" laughed Hilary. "And your grand cake! How could you bake it when it was so hot?"

"Another donation, my dear; that is Mrs. Blake's cake."

"Ours now," put in Gordon between bites.

"This is a good time, Mother," said Dr. Lan-

caster, "to tell Hilary about Aunt Hilary's letter. It would seem that she is right about Hilary's busy life."

The effect of the news upon the children was varied. All exclaimed and looked at Hilary, who hardly knew at first whether to be glad or sorry, provided the plan was adopted. She caught her breath in astonishment.

"How lovely of Aunt Hilary!—but how can I give up my class and all the girls?" Then, thinking of the reported charms of boarding school life she added, "It would be fun, I suppose. May I go to any school I want?"

"Yes," replied her father, "unless you choose some ultra-fashionable place. We want a real preparation for college. As your aunt suggests, we can send for catalogues and decide together."

"Father talks as if he's going to let you do it," said Gordon.

"But," said June, who was trying hard not feel left out and to be generously glad for Hilary, "what can we ever do without Hilary?"

"Your very question, little daughter, goes a long way to prove that it might be just as well for Hilary to have a little less pressure outside while she is working so hard at her lessons. I do want her to excel there,—as she does."

"But I *like* everything!" cried Hilary. "Do you suppose I can ever *stand* it to leave you all?"

"You have been planning to stand it when you go to college," remarked Mrs. Lancaster, who was wondering privately how she could bring herself to spare her oldest.

"But I'd be older then."

"Think what fun it will be, Hilary, continued her mother, "to buy your clothes and get everything ready this summer."

"O, can I choose my clothes, Mother?—think of it,—little old Hilary! It is too wonderful! I wonder what Annette and the rest of the girls will say."

"Hilary said 'can' for 'may'," corrected June, putting a spoonful of powdered sugar on a few remaining strawberries in her dish.

"I'm not sure, but I meant 'can', anyway, Junie. You will have to help me plan with Mother and Auntie."

Such happy weeks for Hilary that summer. Aunt Hilary announced that none of them would kill themselves sewing; so while they made some pretty things, others were purchased ready-made, or the material handed over to a dressmaker. "Suit, raincoat, winter coat, gloves,"—the list was made out a dozen times before they actually started in to buy. And how they rejoiced in the summer bargains for the simple summer dresses or pretty accessories.

Aunt Hilary had invited Hilary, June and the boys to come and stay through August at her summer cottage, while Dr. Lancaster, with Mrs. Lancaster and little Mary, took his usual vacation in a more quiet spot. Mrs. Garland took pains to show June, Gordon and Tommy that she was interested in them as well as in her namesake. Parties, picnics, boating and swimming where the little inland lake stretched placid waters, with different performances of the enterprising Tommy, made the days fly.

From time to time Aunt Hilary made dainty additions to Hilary's "trousseau", as she called it. Among other things which looked "bridey", according to Hilary, was a cedar chest, over which Hilary hung with clasped hands, so great was her surprise and admiration.

"Look at the lovely lining and pockets, June! Why, Aunt Hilary, it will be my hope box for ever!"

"What is a 'hope box', Hilary?"

"Why, don't you know? That is what the girls call the box where they put their guest towels and doilies and silver and things they are saving for when they get married."

"O, yes; a bridal chest. I see."

"I have several embroidered towels and some silver spoons already."

"Mercy, child, I hope you are not thinking of such things yet!"

"No, indeed, Aunt Hilary; all I can think of is Greycliff and the wonderful year I'm going to have. Honestly, I feel like dancing up and down sometimes and can hardly wait."

So sped the summer days on wings, until finally golden September came once again with the ringing of school bells all over the land.

CHAPTER IV.

GREYCLIFF.

Greycliff Heights was the name of the small town where Mr. Van Buskirk and Cathalina found themselves one bright day in the middle of September. At the station were a few taxicabs decorated with Greycliff banners. A short spin over a pretty, winding road brought them out to the school called Greycliff. There they entered a broad gateway and glided around a curved drive to Greycliff Hall, the girls' dormitory.

A rolling, grassy campus; flowers and a fountain; a scattered group of handsome grey stone buildings, vine-covered; a green wood, whose trees and bushes gradually thinned toward the sandy beach which lay between the campus proper and where the lake danced and shimmered at a distance,—these were what the eye could gather for a first impression.

"Look, Papa!" said Cathalina, "see those lovely horses. Do you suppose they belong here?"

"Very likely."

At some distance beyond the campus, a large pasture was fenced in and there grazed about a dozen pretty ponies and as many horses.

"O, I do believe I shall like the riding lessons after I get over being afraid!"

"As you grow stronger and more used to everything, Cathalina, you will not feel so timid."

By this time they were ready to ascend the steps. A broad veranda with Ionic pillars extended the great width of the great building, and they had no sooner reached the top than from one of the comfortable porch seats there rose a slight woman, somewhat under middle height, who came to meet them. Her face was serious, with wise, observant grey eyes; but when she drew near and held out a cordial hand, a warm smile lit up the whole face and Cathalina's feeling of a stranger in a strange land began to slip away. Introducing herself as the principal, Miss Randolph welcomed the newcomers sincerely and took them into her own reception room.

"If I had not been on the porch, the maid would have brought you in with more ceremony," she said, pleasantly. "I was really expecting you on that train, from what Mrs. Knickerbocker wrote. How is she? She has been a delightful friend to me."

Cathalina had expected to see an older lady of Aunt Katherine's age; but this charming little lady

could scarcely be ten years older than Cathalina's own mother.

A conversation followed, in which Mr. Van Buskirk supplemented the correspondence of the summer with further explanations of his plans for Cathalina. "I think you will find Cathalina obedient and helpful," said he, "and we shall appreciate any hints that you can give her. Since her health is already so much improved by the summer's outing, I think that she can soon be as busy as the rest."

"It will be a pleasure to have her here, I know. I am sorry that there are so few girls here today. To-morrow and the next day will bring them."

"There were no girls at all on our train," said Cathalina, who had been disappointed. Little as she had wanted to come, she was not without a natural curiosity as to her future companions.

"I should be glad if the matter of a roommate could be arranged before you leave, Mr. Van Buskirk, but it may not be possible. The plans of the old girls are all made, so it must be a "new girl". I have in mind a few girls from homes of especial refinement, and I will use my best judgment for Cathalina. Now you will want to see her room."

In response to Miss Randolph's ring there appeared a plump, rosy-cheeked girl whom Cathalina supposed to be a servant, though she was not in maid's attire.

"This is Alma Huntley, one of our girls, who helps me a great deal. Alma, please take Mr. Van Buskirk and his daughter to number fifty-two, second floor."

Through the big hall to the elevator, down another hall on the second floor, and they were ushered into a tiny suite of two rooms at the front of the building, its sitting room at the corner on the side toward the lake. "The girls call this Lakeview Corridor," said Alma.

Cathalina stepped to the window and looked off, through and across the treetops to the restless waters beyond. It did not seem much like home, and Cathalina's eyes filled with tears.

"A fine view for you, my child," Mr. Van Buskirk remarked cheerfully, though it did seem too much like leaving his little girl behind. "Your mother will pay you a flying visit soon; did she tell you?" Mr. Van Buskirk had observed the tears.

"No; will she really?"

"Do you suppose she could stand it long not to see how you are placed? You must take some snap shots for her as soon as possible."

Alma looked interested, but Cathalina did not. Poor Mr. Van Buskirk had tried with varying success all day to suggest everything that might keep up Cathalina's courage or interest her. He smiled a little now, remembering his efforts, successful at

last, not to allow Sylvia to come with her daughter this time.

"Let her have her chance, Sylvia," he had said. It will be hard enough for her anyway, and if you go with her I'm afraid that she will be coming back on the same train!"

But Mr. Van Buskirk hardly did Cathalina justice. She was neither as weak nor as babyish as they feared, in spite of all that they had done to make her so. Endowed by nature with considerable good sense, she had thought the matter over and determined to show the dear home people that she really could amount to something, whether she wanted to do this or not.

To many girls the prospect of a year at Greycliff was a dream of delight. Its very location was attractive. The school was well equipped, well endowed and had at its head a woman of noble character, high culture and earnest purpose. Cathalina had little idea of what pleasant days were before her, days of companionship with other interesting girls; days of wholesome labor brightened by hours of fun and recreation; days of satisfaction in work well done, and days that brought new thoughts to Cathalina of possibilities in her own life.

For some reason Cathalina's trunks had not arrived, so there was no unpacking except of suitcase and traveling bag. She was used to traveling

and was at no loss in getting comfortably settled. Mr. Van Buskirk was made comfortable in the suite next to Cathalina's. He had expected to go back to the hotel at Greycliff Heights, but Miss Randolph had insisted upon his remaining as a guest at Greycliff.

"With all these vacant rooms," said she, "why not stay with Cathalina?" And Cathalina had added her persuasions. There were regular guest rooms, but they were too far from his little girl.

After breakfast the next morning, Mr. Van Buskirk told Cathalina that he preferred to take the lake walk back to the town. His bag was sent by the old-fashioned Greycliff express wagon, while he strolled down the shady walk with Cathalina. He talked earnestly and cheerfully of different matters, and at the arched gateway, where the vines climbed riotously and a little grey squirrel with a nut scolded them both, he kissed Cathalina goodbye and walked away briskly, turning once to give her a military salute and a parting smile. Cathalina blew a kiss and blithely waved her handkerchief, soon, alas, to be put to another use.

"His dear old straight shoulders!" she said, for there was only the squirrel to hear; and in spite of her determination the tears would come. With a sob she collapsed into the rustic seat and was ready for a good cry. But suddenly she gathered herself

together, mopped away the tears and stood up, as straight as her father. "No, I will not! It always makes me sick to cry! I'll see if I can not show a little nerve for once. That is what Father's military salute meant. He was saying to me, 'Remember Martin Van Buskirk and the rest of your Revolutionary ancestors, little daughter of the Revolution! I'm a goose! I'm past fourteen years old and I've been away from home before, and I guess if I wanted to go home awfully I could,—but I'm going to *stay!*"

So the descendant of Martin Van Buskirk and Captain Hart walked as firmly and briskly as her father, up the walk, the front steps and the stairs to her own rooms, where she looked around to see what was to be done. "As Phil says, 'Here goes!' " she remarked to herself, throwing back the top of a trunk; for before her father left, Cathalina's trunks had been sent up and stood unlocked and unstrapped in the hall by the door.

"I wish my roommate were here," she thought; "still, perhaps it will be less confusing if I get my things put away first. And perhaps she'll be homesick, too, poor thing, and I can have a decent looking place for her. Dear me! This does not look much like home! Such teeny rooms, and only one dresser." But thinking of some one else as homesick as herself helped brace poor little Cathalina. She

shook out her pretty, simple frocks and hung them on one side of the large closet which the girls were to share.

"O, dear, I wish I had Etta," she sighed; for by the time the dresser and wraps were hung up and the hats on the shelf, she was tired with the trips from trunks to closet. But she kept on, nevertheless, and spread on the table a pretty embroidered runner that Ann Maria had made for her, and carried there by armfuls books and boxes of finery.

"Can't put anything in the bureau drawers, I suppose, until we divide them. I'm going to buy a big chiffonier, for I don't see how we are ever going to get along. I wish that steamer trunk could have been brought in. I wonder why they won't allow trunks in the rooms. It wouldn't have done any good if I had brought the wardrobe trunk I wanted."

At last the trunks were emptied and all that was to go in the bureau drawers arranged in neat piles on one of the beds. She was standing and considering the windows, bare of curtains, when cheerful sounds drew her over to lean out and see what was going on. Girls were climbing out of one automobile. Another was rounding the curve, ready to stop as soon as the first should move on, and a third was entering the drive. Two express wagons and a motor truck, piled high with trunks, went rattling to the rear of Greycliff Hall.

Waving of handkerchiefs or hands, calls, laughter and "feminine shrieks" met eye and ear. A more mournful girl than Cathalina would have smiled at the sight. Some of the girls, in neat traveling suits, ran up the steps to meet and embrace several hatless ones who hurried down to great them. One girl tossed aside bag and purse to throw her arms enthusiastically around three of her friends. "O, you're all here, after all! Aren't you glad to get back? And you really did come, Mary!"

"Do you know when Gertrude will get in?"

"I have a new roommate and she is a perfect dear!"

"Well, mine's a freak! I'm going to let her understand a few things."

At this disagreeable remark, Cathalina realized that she was unintentionally eavesdropping and drew within her room once more. But her heart was warmed by the sight and she hoped that her roommate was one of those happy girls. More girls arrived shortly, and the halls were alive with the sounds of merry voices and the bumping of trunks at different doors.

"I can't stay here another minute!" cried Cathalina. "I'm going down to see the fun!" She looked in the glass to see that the bows of her hair ribbon were in order and made her way past groups of girls to Miss Randolph's parlor on the first floor.

CHAPTER V.

CATHALINA FINDS HER ROOMMATE.

"ALL these girls," thought Cathalina, "and I don't know a single one!—but Alma." The night before and at breakfast she had been at Miss Randolph's table, with her father and a few teachers, in the comparatively empty, echoing dining room. One other table was set and boasted a teacher and a few quiet, tired girls who had come a long distance.

Miss Randolph's door stood wide open, and there was Miss Randolph, standing, note book in hand, in the midst of a roomful of girls in various stages of bewilderment, weariness, or interest, waiting their turn. A few mothers, fathers and other guardians of youth waited also.

As Cathalina peeped in rather timidly, feeling, however, that Miss Randolph was her only rock in a sea of uncertainty, that lady beckoned her in and spoke to a young girl near, whose bright, alert look and winning expression Cathalina had noticed.

"Miss Lancaster, this is Miss Van Buskirk, who will, I am sure, show you to your room and make it unnecessary for you to wait any longer. Alma is busy elsewhere, Cathalina,—if you do not mind,—"

"I shall be very glad," said Cathalina, unconsciously imitating the Sylvia Van Ness Van Buskirk sweetest manner of courtesy.

"Hilary Lancaster will be your roommate," continued Miss Randolph, turning away rather abruptly to attend to the wants of one of the older girls who came in just then with perplexity written on her face. Many adjustments were necessary in these first school days. There were a few single rooms, some large suites, occupied by several girls together, and smaller ones like the two-room suite to be occupied by Cathalina and Hilary.

As playing the part of hostess came naturally to Cathalina, Hilary, for of course it was the Hilary, received a much better impression of her new roommate than if she had arrived first to see Cathalina in the throes of homesickness. "Pretty and awfully sweet," was Hilary's mental comment. Cathalina, too, was delighted with the bright, companionable girl who, full of interest and chatting away, went gaily to their little suite.

Hilary went first to the windows to take a look at the lake, then threw hat and jacket on the bed and dropped herself into the one rocking chair. Catha-

lina was already seated on the foot of her own bed, beginning to sort a few leftovers.

"Isn't this the most lovely place? I've been crazy to come ever since I got over the first shock of giving up my high-school class. I can scarcely believe that I'm actually here for two years."

"O, won't you go home?" asked Cathalina, who often took things literally.

"Yes, of course, vacations; but I can be here two whole years. And then if nothing happens, I'm going to college." Hilary said this as if there were nothing more in life to be desired.

Cathalina was amused, for her ambitions, so far, had not included completing any course here, to say nothing of a four years' college course.

"Rap-rap" at their sitting room door. Both girls started to answer the knock. There stood an attractive girl in a pink kimono. Two heavy braids of blonde hair, tied together with a pink ribbon, hung straight from a shapely head. Pretty white teeth gleamed when she gave them a happy smile and held out a pan of fudge. "Come over to fifty-one," she said, as each selected a piece of hot candy. "We heard that fifty-two had some new girls. Come over and be social, though you mustn't mind how we look."

Hilary and Cathalina did not hesitate, but followed the pink kimono and the pan of fudge into a

room that looked like the first stages of a rummage sale. Pennants, books, pictures, clothing, boxes, curtains, bedding, and all sorts of articles strewed tables, chairs and floor. And there on the rug, in the middle of the floor, for want of a better seat, were three more girls in gay kimonos. Cathalina observed that these girls had done what her mother had warned her not to do. They had taken everything out of trunks in a hurry, to pile it all here, there and everywhere until convenient to sort and find a place for the articles of this remarkable collection. Nobody was worrying about it, that was evident.

"Can you really make fudge here?" Hilary was asking as they entered.

"Not in our rooms, but there is a place on every floor where we can make fudge or press our clothes or—anything. "And these, ladies," continued the Pink Kimono with a sweeping gesture, are the Imps, or in other words, the Misses Diane Percy and Helen Paget, sometimes also known as the Sweet P's, though we can't say that is very original. We always have Sweet P's at Greycliff. The other frail being who is unable to rise is Betty Barnes, my unhappy companion in misery, that is, she is in misery, —my roommate. Elizabeth, can't you do anything but grin?"

Three slim arms reached to shake hands and pull Hilary and Cathalina down into the charmed circle, where a bag of salted peanuts was set before them.

"Perhaps you would like to know our names too," said Hilary as she took the bag and poured a few peanuts into Cathalina's hand. "We are Cathalina Van Buskirk, she—and Hilary Lancaster, me. I prefer rhyme to grammar, you see, by poetic license, as my learned father might say. And may we please know the name of the Pink Kimono?"

"Beg pardon," said that bright mystery, sitting down with the rest. I am Lilian North. But wouldn't that make a good name for a detective story or a movie?—'The Pink Kimono'. Honestly, girls, I am so full of nonsense today that I am positively silly!"

Diane assumed a pained expression and said in a stage whisper to the other "Imp", "She has discovered it."

"Imp!" cried Lilian.

Diane Percy was grey-eyed and red-cheeked, with a crisp, decided way of speaking; while her roommate, Helen Paget, was golden-haired, with dark eyes, and a delicious Southern drawl. Betty Barnes was slim and fair, her soft, dark hair tied with a rose ribbon, her blue eyes much like Cathalina's in hue, her manner demure, and a trifle more reserved than that of Lilian. All were nice girls and this

proved to be the beginning of a happy friendship for both Cathalina and Hilary. Of their homes and history we may learn more later.

The amount of fudge and peanuts was steadily diminishing, while many things about the school were being discussed and the girls were getting acquainted, when Hilary sprang up suddenly at the sound of baggage, being thumped and bumped not far away. "That must be my six band boxes and a bird cage," said she, and with a farewell wave disappeared.

"I must go too," said Cathalina, wondering if Hilary really did have band-boxes. "Thank you all so much for the good time; you must come over to see us—won't you?"

"Indeed we will," replied Lilian and the others variously expressed their friendly intentions. Number 51 was a three-room suite, two single beds in each bedroom, the common sitting room large and sunny, with an attractive window seat, which would doubtless be fitted up with cushions when the girls finally decided to straighten up their belongings. As Cathalina left the girls for her own quarters, a young cyclone in short dress and with new shoes that squeaked, bumped past, almost upsetting Cathalina, and with a careless "beg pardon", flew past, breaking in a door a little further down the hall and shutting it with a bang. Cathalina stood looking

after her with a shocked expression, and Hilary, who just then appeared in the door of 52, laughed and remarked, "Another of our neighbors, I suppose!"

Hilary's cedar chest, which had been carefully wrapped and crated, stood in all its glory inside the room, and the old janitor, as he appeared to be, seeming to be in charge of the trunk brigade, was unstrapping a trunk outside.

"O, thank you!" cried Hilary, as the perspiring janitor unlocked the trunk with the key she handed him.

"No tips," whispered Cathalina aside; "Miss Randolph said she does not allow it."

"Hilary, who had not traveled, except from one of her father's appointments to another, hardly knew what tipping was, and would never have thought of it, looked wise and said nothing.

A busy hour or two followed. Cathalina told Hilary how nicely her plan worked, so Hilary did likewise, transferring her belongings, rather slowly, it is true, from trunk to closet, bureau drawers and cedar chest without the confusion of the neighboring room. Only light articles had been packed in the cedar chest for the trip.

"It takes longer at first," remarked Hilary, "but it seems to be the better way. I hope you will not mind, Cathalina, but I'm really not very neat. You

see, there was always so much to do at home that I neglected my room sometimes for other things and June so often picked up for both of us."

"I'm not neat, either," said Cathalina, "because Etta,—well, I just don't know how very well."

"We'll have to criticise and train each other, then. You come to the bedroom door and say, 'My dear Hilary, do you intend to leave those things on that chair?' and I will say politely, 'O, no, indeed, Cathalina, pray come in and sit down!' " Hilary illustrated her supposed hospitality by lifting from a chair the armful of clothing which she had just sorted. "I heard Diane say that Miss Randolph is very particular about how the girls keep their rooms."

"Yes, and do you remember how Betty said without smiling a bit that that was why they were in such a hurry to get fixed up!—sitting there in all that muss!" Cathalina stood by the dresser, tucking away the last box of trinkets. She appeared quite a different Cathalina from the one who cheerfully but tearfully had waved farewell to her father earlier that morning. "Let's go down and see what the grounds look like as soon as you are through."

"All right," assented Hilary. "I believe I'll stop now; I'm tired. The worst is over and I can lay the rest of the things out of the trunk on the bed. Then the trunk can be taken down the next time the

men come up with a load. Perhaps that's why the other girls did that way."

"Perhaps."

"Wait till I fix up a little. We have lots to learn, I guess."

"My, I think so! There are loads of things that I ought to have brought to make the room look nice, and then I'm going to find a chest something like yours if I can, or maybe Mother will send me one," continued Cathalina who remembered that she was not to have or appear to have much money.

"Mm-hm," came Hilary's muffled assent as she slipped into a fresh cool dress.

The girls explored the front hall downstairs, glancing from side to side and peeping into the two large reception rooms which occupied the entire front. At the end of the long corridor, a wide window looked out upon Greycliff Wood, into which a pretty path opened and disappeared, lost to view among the trees and bushes. The lake was dimly seen at the right, and at their left the rising ground and wooded hills which extended back of Greycliff Hall. A door was near this window, and a short flight of steps to the ground. As the girls started down the steps, two attactive girls stood up politely to let them pass. One, looking a second time at

Hilary, exclaimed, "Why, isn't this Hilary Lancaster?"

"Indeed it is."

"Don't you remember me—Grace Barnard?" At your aunt's not long ago."

"O, yes!—at that picnic! How funny! Did you know you were coming here then?"

"Yes, this is my third year here, but I did not dream of your coming!"

"The funny thing is that I did not mention Greycliff. I was so full of it that I thought I was never with anybody five minutes without speaking of it. But did Aunt Hilary know that you are a Greycliff girl?"

"No; I've only just met your aunt."

"My, to think what I missed knowing about Greycliff besides looking forward to having somebody I knew here!"

Cathalina and the other girl had been exchanging amused glances and now introductions became general.

"This is my roommate," said Hilary, "Cathalina Van Buskirk, from New York."

"And this is my friend, Eloise Winthrop," returned Grace. " I hope she is going to get into our suite this year, but it isn't decided yet."

"We are just exploring," said Hilary. "I was tired of unpacking."

"Come on, then, we'll go with you if you don't mind. There is hardly time before luncheon to take you through the grove or down to the beach, but we can look around a little."

The girls paired off, Grace with Hilary, Eloise with Cathalina, arm in arm. Eloise's heavy, dark hair was braided about her head and crowned with a bright scarlet bow. Her face was full of animation and her light, active figure was a match for Cathalina's grace, but Eloise had the suppressed energy and nervous force that Cathalina seemed to have lost. As she talked to Cathalina she frequently turned to look at her with a pair of starry brown eyes which quite stirred Cathalina into a lively enjoyment of her present adventures.

Crossing the lawn in front, they stopped a moment at the fountain where two plump cupids were catching water in a sea shell.

"That building so close to Greycliff Hall is Randolph Hall," explained Grace, as they strolled by. "It was named in honor of Miss Randolph's uncle, because he gave a lot of money to endow the school. Almost all the recitation rooms are there, and the hall where we have chapel and other doings. Over there is the Gym and the Domestic Science building. And there are the stables and riding pavilion."

"Come around by Randolph," said Eloise, "if you want to see the rest. The Music Hall is only a

frame building and they are trying to raise money for a better one. But we have a fine pipe organ in Randolph. The studios are all prettily furnished and they have good pianos. I'm practicing on a fright, though. And a girl right over my head, with the same practice hour, keeps time with her foot—or did last year. I'm going to speak for a different piano this time. Look over to your left now. That's the Pest House."

"Pest House!" exclaimed Cathalina, "do you often have contagious diseases?"

"That is our name for the hospital. We have two nurses and one of them isn't much older than some of the girls."

"That makes me think," said Cathalina, "I notice that some of the girls seem so grown up, like college girls."

"Why, you know there are two years of college work here. We call them Junior and Senior Collegiate, or Junior and Senior C. I'm Junior Academy, what are you?"

"Father said Junior Academy, I think, but I'm not sure. I didn't read the catalogue; it was too much trouble."

"So am I Junior Academy! cried Hilary, and turned inquiringly to Grace.

"Me, too," said she laughing, "how jolly!"

"You can usually tell the Collegiate girls, Cathalina, by their looks and ways and the way they do their hair. Sometimes they try to be smart with us. As soon as there is enough money there is going to be a Collegiate Cottage, and a building for art, too. All the girls have for a studio now is a room on the upper floor of Greycliff Hall."

Cathalina looked interested. "That is one thing I just adore! But my father knows if I get started in that I will just stick around and draw and paint half the time. He wants to have me get outdoors as much as possible."

"My, that would be the limit,—drawing!" said Hilary. "Excuse me, high school slang. Father said I was to cut it out entirely."

" 'Cut it out?' " suggested Eloise, mischievously.

"Yes, there it is again; it doesn't seem to be as much easier here as Father thought."

"We girls are not any too particular here," remarked Grace, "but Miss Randolph says a great deal about it and some of us are trying to use good English. Our English teacher told us last year that 'our speech influences our thought' and that after a while we will not be able to think anything but the slang—'and what will you do when you want to associate with people of refinement?' she asked. She said we'd be embarrassed and not be able to talk and people would think us idiots!"

"How awful!"

"It certainly made a hit with you, Grace."

"Well, I should say so, and because *my* father said that if I came home and talked like my cousins, May and Jane, just out of college, he wasn't going to let me go to school at all, but have a governess or something. And that would spoil all my plans!"

Cathalina listened amazed, recalling that she had always had the private teaching.

"There is Patricia West, Eloise," said Grace. A young woman came out of the music building and walked rapidly across the campus, smiling and waving her hand at the girls.

"She is one of our instructors, Cathalina, new this this year. She is one of the old grads here, finished in one year at college by taking summer school, took out her M. A. last year and here she is. Everybody likes Patty. I had a terrible crush my first year here."

Cathalina knew only vaguely what a "crush" was, but said nothing. How much older Grace seemed, probably about sixteen.

"I am certainly not ashamed of admiring Patty because she is so dear. They say that the boys are crazy about her, even if she does know so much. She has oodles of beaus."

Cathalina and Hilary turned to look again at the girl that had "oodles of beaus", for no girl is so

young that there is not some fascination about romance.

"What's the use of all this, then?" and Eloise waved her hands at the intellectual surroundings.

"She likes it," answered Grace. "I'll bet she's been in signing up for piano now. Very likely she'll teach and take several courses besides."

"Mercy!" murmured Cathalina.

"It isn't natural," wailed Eloise in pretended grief. "That sort of girl ought to be homely and absent-minded. Of course, she'll be a cross teacher anyhow, if she does look so sweet."

"Almost lunch time, girls," announced Grace, glancing at her wrist watch. I have to go up to the suite first,—can you girls find your way to the dining room? I promised to hunt up a new girl and take her down and one of our suite-mates is waiting for us too."

"I've been to the dining room twice," said Cathalina. "Don't worry about us."

"Goodbye, then, till we see you later," and Grace and Eloise ran swiftly across the campus toward Greycliff Hall.

CHAPTER VI.

GREYCLIFF GIRLS.

THERE were only thirty or forty girls at luncheon, although from the excitement and noise of arrivals Cathalina had been sure that the Hall was full. "Just wait till tonight," said Lilian North, who accompanied the girls to their door. "Then you'll not be able to hear yourself think in the dining room."

Once more in the privacy of their own little apartment, Cathalina and Hilary began to put on the finishing touches to arrangement of their possessions and to think of coming duties. "Recitations begin tomorrow," said Hilary, "and we must find out about the rooms and teachers and everything."

"I'm simply frightened to death to think of it! How am I ever going to get up and say anything before a roomful of girls and with a sharp-eyed professor looking at me. My!"

Hilary looked at Cathalina in surprise. "Why should you mind so much? Are you always that way?"

"'Always',—why, Hilary, I never went to school in my life before!"

"O," Hilary was wondering and wanting to ask why and all about it.

"That is why," Cathalina ran on, "my work is so irregular. I'm ahead in some things and behind in others."

"You have had private teachers, then?"

"Yes."

"What are you going to take?"

"First year Latin and Algebra and Senior Collegiate Literature," replied Cathalina, looking at a paper in her father's handwriting to make sure. "Papa thinks that I have had enough French and German, because I can speak them and read the literature myself any time. He wants me to catch up in Latin and Mathematics as soon as possible."

"Well, you *are* mixed! You will recite with the infants in Latin and Math and with the 'young ladies' in Literature. I'm a regular Junior Academy, of course, because I've had two years of high school. But that makes you only—five, ten, thirteen hours."

"What are 'hours'?"

"Hours of recitation, you know. Latin recites every day, so that's five hours a week,—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday."

"I see; but why do you say 'only'? My father said that if I had too much work I could drop Literature."

"Why, thirteen hours is *nothing!*"

"Well, if you had never been to school," began Cathalina, looking almost ready to cry, "you'd think it was enough."

Hilary's warm heart was sorry, though she had thought it rather "airy" for Cathalina to mention speaking French and German. She spoke quickly, "O, don't feel bad, Cathalina, I did not mean to be horrid. I suppose your father knows best. I certainly wish I could speak some foreign languages. Let's trade. If I get 'stuck' in French you help me, and if you should have any trouble in algebra, maybe I can help you out."

"All right, it's a bargain!" and Cathalina stretched out a little hand browned by the sun of the summer by the shore.

"Then there'll be Gym, of course," added Hilary.

"I'm excused from the gymnasium work and going to take swimming and riding lessons. I learned to float this summer, was always too afraid to try it before."

"I'm going in for tennis and basketball. I'm crazy about basketball. But come on, let's go to the beach. I can almost hear those waves calling!"

"I hear you calling me!" sang Cathalina, as they

started with no further delay. If Mother Sylvia and Father Philip had seen their daughter as she raced with Hilary down the bank to the beach, they surely would have thought that a miracle had happened. Poor little Cathalina had needed "somebody to play with". She was breathless and sat on the sand with color in her cheeks and panting from the exercise which hardly disturbed sturdy Hilary. A few other girls were there, too, throwing pebbles into the water, or wading out a short distance, or watching the gulls and terns through field glasses. Out by the breakwater, the birds were flying and fishing, sometimes coming quite near to rest on the posts by the little dock further down the shore. There was the boathouse, locked now; and fast to the dock was a handsome little launch, "Greycliff" painted on her side.

"O-oo-oh!" exclaimed Hilary. "I just wont want to study at all! Boats and a launch!"

"Don't worry!" said a fat little girl who was sitting on the sand not far from Cathalina. "They only let us go on that at certain times."

"I don't care," sang Hilary,—"I know I'll be in it some time before I die, anyhow! Do they let you go out in the boats?"

"Yes, according to rules. And we have canoeing on the river, too, and races sometimes."

"Where's the river?"

"The other side of the grove from Greycliff Hall. Look along there and you can see where it joins the lake."

The two girls presently wandered off alone, along the beautiful beach, until Hilary noticed that Cathalina was especially quiet, and that in their explorations the afternoon had slipped away.

"Getting homesick? So'm I. We must be hungry. Come on; it's a lucky thing at school that meals come three times a day. Mother says that school girls are always hungry."

"If I'm homesick, therefore, I'm hungry? Maybe I am! Anyway let's go and see if any more girls have come. It seemed to me, Hilary, that some of those children on the beach were too young even for the Academy. Do you suppose they were visitors?"

"No; that was one thing *I* didn't know, and I thought I asked about everything there was to know about Greycliff. They take a few very special girls for the grades and have teachers for them. The catalogue doesn't say anything about it because, of course, they don't go in for that. How I know,—there was one on the train coming up and her older sister and I talked. She said it began by not wanting to separate some sisters, and so there may be, perhaps, a dozen little girls here. I've been wishing my sister June could come. But I don't suppose they

could spare us both and then there would be the money."

Savory smells, with rattle of dishes and silver, announced to Cathalina and Hilary, as they slipped in by the side entrance, having taken time to walk through the grove, that dinner was not far off. Soon the gong rang, and coming from different rooms, or running from various directions on the campus, came girls tall or short, plump or slim; girls rosy and girls pale; girls laughing and talking, with arms around old chums, and girls who had just arrived and were depressed with the strangeness of it all and their loneliness in the midst of so much good comradeship. Smiling faces and sober ones; pretty summer dresses, or traveling suits; feet neatly dressed in low shoes or high shoes; sashes, belts; round necks, high necks; hair done high, hair done low, hair down backs in braids, or curls, with bright ribbons,—an endless variety might be seen among the buzzing company that poured in the dining room door and stood behind the chairs at the tables. At a tap of Miss Randolph's bell, all were seated and remained silent when her strong, beautiful voice asked a blessing. Then the hum began again.

"One couldn't feel lonesome here," remarked Hilary.

"I almost do," replied Cathalina.

"Wait until you get started on the eats. I'm 'most starved."

"Poor Hilary! O, I'm all right, but I had a pang thinking of Mother and Father at home."

"Don't think," advised Hilary.

"Just look around, Hilary!" Cathalina had been in many large hotels, but this was different.

At the head of the central table was Miss Randolph, serene, used to all the commotion, gracefully entertaining a few stranded parents, who were gazing around with much interest.

Cathalina had fallen in with Lilian and Betty as they came in, and seeing Eloise and Grace beckoning, all had gathered at the same table. Regular places, of course, could not yet be assigned. As the tables seated ten, only four people new to Cathalina and Hilary were to be introduced. Miss Middleton, an instructor in piano, was at the head. Very thin, tall and pleasant was she. Next was one of the "Senior C" girls, whom Miss Middleton seemed to know well. Then came a very small girl, Avalon Moore, who acknowledged the introductions shyly and looked as if she wanted to escape. Cathalina, who sat next to Avalon, in feeling sorry for her and trying to think of little things to relieve her embarrassment, began to forget her own strangeness. The poor little girl dropped her fork, upset a glass of water, and in trying to take some gravy trailed

a plentiful supply over the side of her plate on the tablecloth. The whole table was sorry for her and she knew it, which only made things worse.

But Eloise came to the rescue immediately with a question to the music teacher of such general interest that everybody joined in the discussion and allowed little Miss Moore to recover herself unnoticed. Cathalina quietly began to talk to her about the school and the girls, mentioning how lost and homesick she had felt that morning, but how beautiful the place was and what nice girls she had met already. Avalon began to feel quite natural and looked at the dainty Cathalina with such admiring eyes that she was pleased; for among the relatives it was Cathalina who looked up to the older girls, Ann Maria, Emily or Louise.

Another girl at the table aroused Cathalina's interest. She had been introduced as Evelyn Calvert and came from Kentucky. There was a little difference between her speech and that of Helen Paget, who was also from the South, Cathalina did not know from what part as yet. At first Cathalina thought Evelyn affected, but held her decision for some future time. Although Evelyn was probably no older than Cathalina, she had all the airs and graces of an older girl and, indeed, real charm with it all. Her long, dark lashes lifted or dropped, and smiles came and went as she talked.

"Aunt Sue put huh hands on huh hips," Evelyn was saying to the Senior C girl across the table, "and said 'Miss' Ev'lyn, yo' gettin' maghty fat an' peart up Nawth, whut foh yo' taken ridin' lessons lak yo' said?

" 'Caint yo' ride good nuff?' 'I just ride foh the fun of it, Aunt Sue,' I told huh. She was actually insulted to heah that I had been takin' ridin' lessons in the Nawth. 'Why, chile,' she said, 'de Calv'ts is jus' nachelly bawn to de saddle!' "

While the table was waiting for dessert, Lilian entertained the new girls by indicating in nods and glances the different girls of interest or prominence. She, too, called their attention to the new instructor, Patricia West, who sat at the next table and was chatting and laughing with some of the older girls. "That is Daisy Palmer next to Patricia,—that plump, red-haired girl with the sweet mouth. She is president of Y. W. and a splendid girl. Everybody counts on her. That tall girl with the white dress and blue sash is Julia Merton. She is a Junior Academy and will be in your classes, Hilary. She is a German shark."

"What in the world is a 'shark'? asked Hilary. That is something new to me!"

"O, knows everything about it and takes the highest grades. The one in pink is her roommate, Margaret Brown. Isn't she pretty?—the one in pale

pink, with the real yellow hair. The other girl in pink is Dorothy Appleton. See her? She is in your class, too."

At a table near, Dorothy was leaning forward, slender wrists braced against the edge of the table, while she talked earnestly to Julia Merton opposite. Small, white teeth, regular features, strong for a girl so young, and brilliant black eyes were much in evidence as she talked or smiled. Had Cathalina realized the part some of these girls would play in the drama of school life, she would have taken more pains to observe them.

"The proud looking girl looking this way, there at the foot of the second table over,—well, she was the captain of our Sophomore basketball team last year, Madge Ross. She is out of athletics now, she says. She can't stand it to be beaten, has a high temper, is awfully blunt and can't keep a roommate very long. I guess some new girl is going to have to stand it this year."

Dessert over, a tap on the bell brought silence again, and Miss Randolph rose to make a few announcements and read important notices. One was passed to her as she stood there. There was little of the scene that Hilary or Cathalina missed.

"Let me repeat the announcement that schedules of studies, hours of recitation, rooms and teachers, will be found in the registrar's office on the first

floor, and posted also in the corridors. Miss Farrell's office hours are posted at the door.

"Chapel will be held tomorrow morning at Randolph Hall, the building next to this. All the young ladies,—pupils of any age—are expected to be present.

"The Y. W. C. A. cabinet is asked to meet in the parlor immediately.

"I desire to meet all the new girls as soon as possible. You may come to the library of this building, *not* of Randolph."

"I'm just limp!" Cathalina remarked as at nine o'clock she sat braiding her locks for the night and wishing in the depths of her tired little soul for Etta to come and get her ready for bed. "That poor little Avalon Moore stuck to me as if I were her last friend. I loved to help her, but I knew so little myself. You were a dear, Hilary, to take hold and find her room and roommate for her."

"O, I'm used to towing people around," said Hilary, smiling broadly. "You remember that I'm a minister's daughter! We'll get up early tomorrow, wont we? and write home. I'm too tired now, aren't you? Hasn't it been a day of it?"

"Well, I think so! It seems a week since Papa left this morning. Can you remember the name of all the girls we've met?"

"Mercy, no!" cried Hilary. "At this minute I can't even remember the name of the Pink Kimono next door!"

"That is because we called her that first, I suppose; Lilian,—Lilian,—"

"North," announced Hilary in triumph. But the lot of 'em we met after dinner!"

"This is only the first day, remember."

"But I can't help feeling the way we do when we go to a new place, that we must remember everybody."

"Why?"

"O, people feel hurt, you know—that's one of our jobs, to get acquainted."

"Our minister's been in our church twenty-five years and almost belongs to our family, we think. He married Mamma and Papa and baptized us children, so we think everything of him and his wife, too."

"Twenty-five years! We usually stay four or five years. I like to move around, but Mother doesn't. If she has a nice parsonage she would certainly like the twenty-five year plan!"

Cathalina yawned, shook off her slippers and hopped into bed.

"I just set my new alarm clock for five o'clock, Cathalina; are you game?"

"I am," said Cathalina firmly, though never in her life had she risen at the call of an alarm clock.

A faint sound of splashing waves on the lake shore came through the open windows to the drowsy girls; while a soft breeze stirred the straying locks about Cathalina's contented face and brought happy dreams to Hilary.

CHAPTER VII.

CATHALINA'S FIRST RECITATION

A TERRIBLE sound wakened Cathalina and she sprang out of bed. "Brr-rr-rr-ting-a-ling-a-ting-ting-ting!" She found herself shaking behind her bed and realized that the alarm clock, not far from Hilary's head, was the source of the racket.

"For pity's sake!—Hilary!" cried Cathalina.

Hilary turned and threw her arms out over the spread.

"Hilary! Wake up! I don't know how to stop the old thing!"

One eye opened. Hilary slowly sat up and looked in dazed fashion at Cathalina who was back in bed, laughing with her fingers in her ears. "Please stop it, Hilary."

"It's the intermittent kind," said Hilary sleepily, and as if to prove her words the noise stopped for a moment, only to resume operations with renewed vigor. Hilary reached for the clock and turned off the alarm.

"And you never even wakened!"

A little later, two new fountain pens were busily scratching away at the first letters home. This was Hilary's:

DEAREST MOTHER AND FATHER:

Just a few lines before breakfast to tell you that I arrived safe and sound and am pretty well settled. Miss Randolph has put me in a lovely suite looking on the lake, with a sweet roommate, too, (Gordon will groan at that pun, I suppose),—Cathalina Van Buskirk, from New York. I suppose she belongs to one of those old Dutch families. I heard her mention "Aunt Knickerbocker" and Somebody Van Ness. I think she is about my age, perhaps a little younger. She has blue eyes, and light brown hair and is very pretty. You would call her very much of a lady and I'm sure we shall get along. She has never been to school before and dreads to recite with the other girls.

My trip did not have any startling happenings. I felt so fine in my new suit and with that elegant traveling bag Father gave me, and I did enjoy the cooler air as we came near the lake. It is perfectly great here! I wish you all could come too. I shall write more later and may send a note to Aunt Hilary today.

Recitations begin today. I will tell you about them and send you my schedule, so you can pin it up,

as you said, and know what I am doing almost every hour.

Thank you all so much for everything. Give my love to June, Gordon and Tommy, and hug my little Mary for her old Hilary! Tell June that I'll write her very soon. The breakfast bells—gong—will ring in a minute, so goodbye for this time.

Your loving and grateful

HILARY.

P. S.

We met a lot of girls and roamed all over the place yesterday. Miss Randolph is not what I imagined a preceptress, or dean would be, tall, stately and commanding. I rather guess she could be commanding, though. She is nice to everybody now and has a beautiful voice and quite an "air" about her, if she isn't very tall.

H.

Cathalina's letter ran thus:

MY DEAR MOTHER:

As I told my roommate (Hilary Lancaster), last night, it seems a week since Father said goodbye yesterday morning. But I have not spent the time in tears as I know he was afraid I would. Tell him that his military salute had the effect. And really from the first I've been too busy to cry or be very homesick. I unpacked and then the girls

kept coming from the trains, and Miss Randolph handed over to me such a nice roommate, and there were so many things to do and see that nobody could help getting interested. Hilary is the daughter of a minister and so smart, can do anything, I guess. I believe Miss Randolph did take pains to select my roommate. She said "Hilary is a fine girl". I am sure she had never met her before, so how could she tell?

We have met ever so many girls of all sorts. Wait till I have time to write you a decent letter and tell about the Pink Kimono and the fudge, the fat little girl that I met by the lake and the homesick one that thought I was an "old girl" and wept on my shoulders. She little knew how much I felt like joining with those that weep! I am still scared at the thought of reciting with the rest tomorrow, but I'll hope for the best, as Ann Maria says when she hasn't looked at her lesson!

Don't worry about me a moment. I remember those last dear days at home (here Cathalina had to stop and swallow a lump in her throat), and how you all tried to get me used to the idea of coming away. I'll do my best to grow strong and keep busy, and I think now that it's going to be "great fun", as Phil says. I feel better and sort of stirred up already. There is the gong for breakfast and

I'm actually hungry. We got up early and looked up our school things. Love to you all.

Your very loving daughter,

CATHALINA.

When Cathalina's letter was received it was eagerly opened. With what relief did Mr. and Mrs. Van Buskirk catch the new note in Cathalina's message. Sylvia, to whom the house had been a lonely place without her little girl, finally dissolved into tears and sobbed a little on Philip's shoulder; while he, who hated tears as men do, nevertheless comforted her and let her have it out.

The busy pastor of Glenwood, with his wife, quite as eagerly read the brief letter from their daughter, the first of their flock to leave home for any length of time. And at family prayers that night a strong petition went up for the "dear child among strangers and the sweet girl with her" . . . "Keep them, O Lord, and give Thy angels charge over them, and may Thy truth be their shield and buckler!"

Meanwhile, the two girls, in their neat school dresses, made ready for their first class. Hilary, capable and serious, took notebook and pencil. Cathalina, who hardly knew how to prepare, followed her example. "I'm a great hand," said Hilary, "to jot everything down and then I know just what to do." They had consulted the

schedule of hours and rooms the night before and had made out their lists with the name of each teacher.

"Number seventeen, Randolph," mused Cathalina, "for Latin, and number fifteen for algebra. How shall I ever find out about everything. I envy the old girls. They needn't waste so much time asking questions and wandering around."

"O, we'll be old girls next year," said Hilary. "Let's take the elevator down. It's on the side next Randolph and near the covered way."

Cathalina soon found herself, with about twenty other girls, entering a pleasant recitation room, at whose desk sat an intellectual looking woman of early middle age.

"My, she looks awful," thought Cathalina, and glanced at her schedule again. "Prof. Emmeline Carver, M.A., Ph.D!"

In hushed silence the class sat waiting, most of them new, first year girls, scared and awed. To everybody's relief, Dr. Carver spoke pleasantly, if a bit stiffly, gave the name of the text book and directed the class to the front hall where a supply of the books was on sale. With the assignment of a lesson and a few general remarks on the importance of their Latin course, she then dismissed them.

As the girls escaped, for that seemed to be the general feeling, one of them near Cathalina drew

a long breath and said, *Doctor* Carver. I don't like her looks. I bet she carves *us* up, all rightee. They say what she doesn't know about Latin and Greek and German isn't worth knowing, but O my! Let me get my book and get to work!"

"Nonsense!" thought Cathalina. "I don't believe she is so bad. She looks intelligent and interesting, as Mother would say. If she is too awful I'll talk it over with Miss Randolph. She wont let me be actually slaughtered!" Cathalina almost giggled aloud at the application of Dr. Carver's name. "Old Carver," Diane called her this morning, and I thought her so disrespectful and not at all refined. I wonder what Hilary will think of her in Cicero."

At the algebra class Cathalina met Professor Goodman and liked him at once. He was a scholarly, kind-looking man, with a keen eye and a brisk manner. With his family he lived at Greycliff Heights.

"No real recitations today," reported Cathalina to Hilary.

"Same here. Pretty nice place so far, isn't it?"

Cathalina laughed. "Yes, but I feel the sword hanging over me."

"Nonsense! Honestly you won't mind it."

"With such speeches from Hilary, Cathalina kept up her courage until the hour arrived and she walked in to the class in beginning Latin, feeling much as

the old martyrs must have felt when they were led to the stake. Both girls had put every spare minute on their lessons, bravely refusing all invitations to visit lake or campus, or to explore the many as yet unknown delights of Greycliff. Experienced Hilary had said, " There's a good deal in the way you begin, whether it's a game or a lesson." So Cathalina puzzled over the rather uninteresting introductions of her text books. Latin promised well, since she had already studied other tongues than English, but she had a terrible time committing the rules of quantity. Algebra, as she told Hilary, looked like a Chinese puzzle.

"Thank fortune, the V's are toward the end of the alphabet!" she thought, as she was assigned a seat in the back row. "I won't have the rest of the class staring at me when I recite."

"Miss Van Buskirk, you may explain what we mean by quantity in Latin and give the rules." Miss Carver looked up from the roll from which she was calling upon the as yet unknown quantities of her class.

Cathalina was frighetned, but rose mechanically, and to her own amazement, her mind cleared, she met calmly the fierce glare of Miss Carver's spectacles and words began to come.

"Louder, please, this is not a drawing room conversation," came the sarcastic tones as Dr. Carver's

lips curved into an unpleasant smile. Cathalina's voice rose, and her repressed ire gave her just enough self-possession to sail through the rules without a break, after which she sat down, quivering but triumphant.

"You are not through, Miss Van Buskirk. That was a good exhibition of memory, but have you any idea of the meaning of the rules?"

Cathalina rose again. "I was hoping that you would explain," she said meekly. "I understand a little."

That was a better shot than Cathalina knew, for Dr. Carver was not particularly clear or helpful in explanation, but wonderfully pompous in making demands upon the class. By the time the class was dismissed its members were in various stages of nervous prostration, as one of the girls told it, but strange to say, Cathalina's fear was gone.

When Hilary came into the suite before lunch, Cathalina was curled up on the bed working on algebra. "How did Cicero go?" she asked demurely.

"My! the dear doctor slaughtered 'em right and left. She's a new variety, as the vegetable catalogues say. There'll be great fun. I see you're still alive."

"Fun! I don't like to be made angry. It keeps me from learning. I wish there were another class

to somebody else! My other teachers are fine,—human!"

"Isn't it funny that Miss Randolph has anybody like that? It's hard enough to be a lady anyhow, without an example like that in the school room!"

"If the girls were disrespectful or anything there'd be some excuse. I never *heard* anybody talk like that."

"Rap-rap-rap."

"Come in," called Hilary, running out to the sitting-room door. Half a dozen girls came in.

"Welcome, merry sunshine!" said Hilary with her best bow. "You look like a church committee. What does this mean?"

"Council of war," answered Eloise, her eyes flashing. "Do you want to join?"

"Mercy!" said Cathalina appearing in the door. "What side are you on, Germany or the Allies?"

"No need to ask, under this flag," and Eloise struck an attitude, pointing to Old Glory floating from the flag pole on the front of the campus. "But whatever we are we are on the war path! Little children are safe, however, so don't worry." (These were the days of the first shocks and surprises of the World War.)

"How are you getting along, Cathalina," asked Lilian, who knew how Cathalina felt about going to recitation.

"Fine," answered Cathalina. "After my first recitation, which I came through whole, in spite of Dr. Carver, I haven't minded anything."

"That is right to the point," said Grace. "It has occurred to us that we might do something to improve her state of mind a little, as it were."

"Humph!" Diane exclaimed. "I'm clear mad through and through! Just her air is enough, before she gets off any of that brilliant sarcasm! I declare war here and now!"

Hilary looked distressed. "I'm afraid it isn't right, girls, to feel that way, though I will admit she's the worst I ever saw. What *is* the matter? Has she been here long?"

"No indeed! This is her first year and I hope her last. You ought to have heard her in Virgil today. What did you think of the way she talked to me, Eloise?"

"I was mad for you; I just wanted to go right up and slap that woman!"

"Look out, Eloise, your eyes will light the gas!"

Eloise laughed but kept on. "Diane had a good lesson. All of us had been working our heads off. Any Latin is bad enough, but poetry! You couldn't find a subject *to* some of the sentences, you know. Well, I guess Dr. Carver wanted to show off how much she knew instead of helping us, so she picked out something—I've forgotten what it was,—and

made so much to do about it, and ridiculed Diane and told her it was a pity she hadn't learned that in first year Latin, as if we can remember every old gender or form!"

"I know I'm going to like Latin," said Cathalina, "but how I'm going to like *her* even a little bit is more than I can see. But I suppose you don't absolutely have to like all your teachers, do you?"

"It makes it much nicer," said Hilary, "and I suppose teachers do have a hard life!" The girls laughed at Hilary's serious tone.

"Never mind, Hilary,—you're a preacher's daughter, so we won't ask you to do anything. We aren't going to do much ourselves, only stir her up a little and have some fun. Promise, now, girls, that you won't tell, or be surpirsed at anything, or give anybody a hint?"

"Never!" promised both Hilary and Cathalina, smiling broadly.

"Then watch and wait for developments!" and the six girls filed out.

"What do you suppose they'll do, Hilary?" Cathalina looked excited and interested.

"Haven't the least idea. Maybe it will all fall through. Girls are like that sometimes."

"Not these girls. They have been here, you know, and can think of things. Ann Maria is like that, into all the fun going on."

"Who is Ann Maria,—cute name."

"She is my cousin, about my brother's age and has been to boarding school for several years, in the East. You ought to hear her and my brother tell about their schools! Well, we shall see—"

"What we shall see!" finished Hilary.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONSPIRATORS.

Suite No. 59 was "seething with conspiracy", as Betty Barnes declared. "No, thank you, I haven't time to come in, or to be a Catiline." Upon which Virginia Morris, also of the Cicero class, appropriately cried, "How long, O Carver, will you abuse our patience?"

"O tempora, O mores!" added Lilian North.

"Mercy, Lil, you don't mean to say you remember that!"

"Only that. I recognized it when I found it. It is a pet expression of my father's. Why didn't you ask Hilary to come in?"

"Nothing doing," replied slangy little Isabel Hunt. She it was whom Cathalina had seen as the small cyclone whirling past on that first day. "Hilary wouldn't do it."

"We're not going to do anything bad," said Eloise.

"No, but I think her little conscience would hurt her."

"And why not Cathalina, then?"

"O, she's too high and mighty, and besides she's only in the beginning Latin class."

"So are you," Eloise and Lilian, who were high-minded girls, did not much relish the implication that Hilary and Cathalina would not consider this an exactly noble undertaking.

Isabel laughed. "That's so, but I am a 'bold spirit, my hearties'!"

"Well, what are we going to do?" asked Lilian.

Diane pretended to tear her hair.

"I've thought of several schemes that we might try, nothing very smart, but she's new here and we might have some fun out of it." This was from Virginia. So with gigglings and whisperings and putting together of heads bright and mischievous, they laid their plans for a trick or two.

"I'll be on hand," said Isabel, "if it takes days, because we want to try this first, as it, ladies and gentlemen, is the one which will do *us* the most good. And now it all depends on a closed door!"

"It does," replied Virginia, with which mysterious saying, all the conspirators save the hostesses took their departure.

For several days after this meeting, about ten minutes before the time for the Cicero class, Isabel Hunt, books under her arm, as if on her way to some class, would stroll carelessly by Dr. Carver's

door. At last there came a day when it was closed. Turning, Isabel waved wildly at Diane, who was also coming early and was just within the outside door at the end of the hall in "Randolph," first floor.

"I saw her there," returned Diane, also whispering, "went by on purpose. Now if she'll just forget to look at her watch and only keep her nose in her book! The electric bell hasn't been working for a day or two, so she'll not be reminded."

They waited a few minutes, then Isabel slipped up to the door and with two or three "stickers," hastily pasted up a notice which she had been carrying for days.

NO CICERO TODAY
ADVANCED LESSON OF
TEN LINES

"Now you go up front," said Isabel, "and head 'em off there. Tell 'em notice up, no lesson today.

"I'll stay to watch her and catch 'em from upstairs. and the outside door. She'll never suspect me if she does come out an' spoil it all, 'cause I'm not in the class.'

"She might think we'd had you put the notice up. Ten lines looks a little suspicious, doesn't it?"

"Yes, because she would give at least thirty, Grace said, but the class wouldn't get any good of it

if they had to get a whole lesson, and after all this trouble!"

"Well, don't let anybody get by you to try the door,—by mistake, of course; nobody would want to!"

"Sh-sh!" warned Isabel, "go along."

The girls began to arrive for class, one or two at a time at first. Fortunately for the scheme the Latin room was at a corner of the building, where the noise of the dismissal of classes was least, and the learned Doctor was very absent-minded.

The sound of the last bell had died away. Isabel and Grace kept count and knew that the last Cicero girl had come and gone, those who did not understand with thankful, smiling looks and no disposition to go to the door to view the notice more closely, and those who were in the plan with careful tiptoeing and looks of joy.

Grace whisked up the stairs in the front of the building, and Isabel up the back stairs, there to meet and giggle, as Dr. Carver at last opened her door and came out in perplexed surprise. She looked up and down the hall, and even went out to the front entrance. Then coming back, she saw the notice. Isabel, who had been leaning over the bannister to see Dr. Carver's movements, backed away into Grace's arms with a suppressed shriek. "I wish you had seen her face when she caught sight of that

notice! She'll finish all of us tomorrow sure! Let's pass the word around to have perfect lessons!"

Grace took a peep, but turning hastily, caught Isabel's arm. "Hurry, she's coming up!" Up the second flight to the third story they tiptoed, right over the angry Doctor's head, and thankful they were that she was fat and slow.

"Come on; we'll be in the library reading, and not together."

"Not I," said Grace, "I'm going to be safe in my little room over at Greycliff Hall. Watch me get down the front stairs!"

The next day faces of great innocence met Dr. Carver's shrewd looks. After marking her roll, she made a few sarcastic remarks about pupils who had nothing better to do than play tricks. "It is an evidence of low order of intellect," said she. More than once she looked sternly at one of the girls who was a gay little thing and rarely had her lessons, but was entirely innocent of any part in this.

"If I did not know that this class is not capable of getting even the usual number of lines, and that I would punish the innocent with the guilty, I would give you a double lesson for tomorrow. But for the present we shall let it go. After this, when you see a notice on a teacher's door take the trouble to try the door and see if the notice has been put up by

authority. Under similar circumstances, hereafter, each pupil will receive a zero for the recitation missed. And let me remark that if any of you are interested in passing the course, you can ill afford to have a zero included among grades that are none too high as it is!"

And the Cicero class surely had reason to squirm that day. No matter how fine the reading, Dr. Carver asked the most unheard of questions (according to their story), and pushed the discussions of subjunctives until, as Eloise said afterward, they all knew that they had never even heard anything before about a Latin verb, let alone understanding it! Ordinarily Eloise and Hilary were ready for the questions on syntax, but today they only shook their heads at the rapid fire of questions put in the "scientific" foreign fashion of making everything as profound and obscure as possible. With dazed eyes they watched the satisfied way in which the offended Doctor of Philosophy recorded grades after their efforts to recite, "zeros at most," said Eloise, "and no doubt she had invented something lower, maybe a zero minus."

All was quiet for several days. Then Isabel met Helen Paget in the corridor one morning and whispered, "I'm ready to be offered up again,—two acts at once this time!" She burst into No. 52, where Hilary was in the midst of a theorem, with,

"Where's Cathalina? I've got to see her!"

"I think that she took her books down to the rocks. She said that Childe Harold's address to the ocean would sound better down there.

"What's she reading that for?"

"Collateral in Lit."

"My, does she take that"—and Isabel was gone.

Five minutes later a flying figure reached and scrambled over the rocks to a high point where Cathalina was sitting and gazing dreamily out over the lake. Her bright hair was blowing about in a fresh lake breeze, her grey-blue sweater buttoned tightly around her. Once arrived, Isabel was in no hurry to explain her object and stood like a rosy bird, balancing on a rock, her hands in the pocket of her sweater, which was red. "Cooler, isn't it?" she remarked.

Now Cathalina had not fancied Isabel very much. Isabel's slangy speech and pert ways did not attract her, though she tried to be friendly to the little girl. To tell the truth, Cathalina's inclinations were not of the sort that admitted readily a number of girls to intimacy. That fact was of course a protection to her, but also kept off for a time at least, some of the girls who were worth knowing. Hilary at this time had the better attitude for girls' school,—helpful, kind and pleasant to every one, yet independent, fearless on matters of right and wrong,

and confiding her private affairs chiefly to that best of confidents, her mother.

"Will you save my life, Cathalina?" asked Isabel brightly, as she sat down on a convenient rock at Cathalina's feet. She secretly admired Cathalina very much and wished that she could be like her. She also felt Cathalina's disapproval of her rough ways, but from some spirit of perverseness, was moved to be a little worse than usual when in Cathalina's presence. This afternoon, however, a different spirit established itself. Isabel's artistic eye and spiritual sense were touched by something "angelic", as she called it, about Cathalina's serious face and dreamy expression, while Cathalina thought that she had never known Isabel so sensible and sweet.

"How can I 'save your life', Isabel?" asked Cathalina at last, remembering Isabel's greeting which had been forgotten in the talk which followed.

Mischief came back into Isabel's eyes. "You are not taking German are you?"

"No."

"Does anybody but Hilary and a few of us know that you can speak it?"

"No."

"Can you write it?"

"Yes," and Cathalina was laughing by this time.

"I can't say that I'm proud of it now. I'd rather remember my French."

"Well, this is the scheme. We want to get Dr. Carver out of her room a few minutes before Virgil begins, and after she has unlocked her door, of course. Virgil comes after lunch, you know. Some one of the class will put a note on her desk, without being seen, if possible. If she is seen and reported she won't really know anything about it, for it will be handed her in the hall and we are going to pass it through several hands to some one who doesn't know anything about our doings!" Isabel giggled. "We want to pretend the note comes from the German professor, just for fun. One of the girls has his initials, so it wont be 'forgery' for her to sign them to the note. Now will you write the script for us?"

"Why don't you write plain English?"

"O she'd get on to the writing, and besides she'll feel complimented at first sight. Patricia says she reads all those awful German books about Latin! She'll take the note to him and they'll laugh about it, that's all. And we'll have time to put our little present on her desk!"

If the truth were told, some of the girls hoped to embarrass their victim in some way and get even for the times when she had so seriously embarrassed them in class. Isabel did not know this, though if

she had it would probably have made no difference; for Isabel was not given to thinking about consequences!

"Please do it, Cathalina?" Isabel looked very pretty, pushing back her short, curly locks as she wheedled Cathalina.

"O, all right,—depends upon what you want me to say. I won't tell any 'whoppers'. See me tonight before study hours."

Isabel went off jubilant. "She'll do it, girls, but we'll have to fix it up all right, because Cathalina isn't the kind of a girl that will write just anything."

"Make it short and snappy," said Diane, "like this: 'Dear Fraulein Carver—May I see you in the library a few minutes before class? Yours, E. F. S.' —or something like that,—however Cathalina wants it."

As this seemed harmless enough, and none of the girls seemed to realize the fact of deception, Cathalina wrote the message in German script and Ellen F. Smith signed her initials, going into the library to "keep the date with our 'beloved teacher'." Lilian who was in the Virgil class, succeeded in placing the note on the desk while Dr. Carver stood near the door conferring with one of the other girls. Then Lilian slipped back into the hall to notify the girl who stood in a retired corner with a cunning gray

kitten, its throat tied with a pretty blue ribbon, from which dangled a card. The girls had spent some time thinking over what to put on the card, the most spiteful suggestion being "TO A CAT". "Be Good To Me; I'm Young," was Eloise's idea, but they finally decided to say, "If you don't like girls, maybe you like kittens," and one of the girls had spoiled a dozen cards or more in writing it artistically.

Cathalina had been worried over the kitten part of the performance and made the girls solemnly promise that they would prop open a crack in the cover of the old-fashioned desk.

"Don't worry, Cathalina, we aren't cruel," said Diane, pretending to be offended.

"O, I know that, Diane!"

The class, as usual, was gathering in the back part of the room, near the windows, in little groups, some listening while a good student read the hard passages to them. There was then, no difficulty in placing the kitten without notice. And when, after a little, a scratching and mewing began, the last bell rang, and Dr. Carver came in radiant. She located the cat instantly, while the girls were taking their regular places, held it up with a sarcastic smile in full view of the class, an unsmiling company, carried the meek animal to the door, dropped it in the

hall and shut the door with more of a bang, doubtless, than she had intended.

That was all there was of incident, and Dr. Carver was so absent-minded, letting one recitation after another pass without comment or correction, that the girls dared to let their own minds wander from the text long enough to wonder what was the the matter.

"Cat and all and the Doctor scarcely mad!" Lilian whispered as the class left the room.

"She didn't even read the card!"

"She must have had a legacy or something."

"Perhaps a letter from her lover."

"Lover! Her!" was the reply to this, ungrammatical but vigorous.

"I wish he'd write oftener, then!"

Later, from suite 52, where the arch conspirators had assembled, came shrieks of laughter. Isabel was one who could appreciate a joke even on herself. "Honestly, girls, it was the funniest thing I ever saw. She was like a different woman. I sat by the table, reading, of course, and only Ellen and two other girls were in there. And just as the first bell rang, who should come in but Der Herr Professor! You know how he looks, all frowzy and wild, with his spectacles and that high collar! Well, he went over to the German alcove and began to pull out the books in a hurry. Presto, appeared Dr. Carver,

and bless you, didn't he start toward her all beaming and nodding, with his hands full of books!

"My dear Doctor Garver,"—here some of the girls nearly doubled up at Isabel's imitation (she was taking expression"). "'I have found dose texts ve vere gommenting on last night.' Then they went on with such a spiel as you never heard! Dr. Carver looked real human, you know, and the old Dutchman—'scuse me, Cathalina, also your Holland ancestors,—*Deutchman,*— looked at her as if she was the only understanding soul he'd met since he landed."

"Very likely she is," remarked Hilary.

"I need not have worried. They never even *saw* me there! I wish you had seen her coquettish look as she flirted out of the room when the second gong rang." Isabel adjusted an imaginary pair of glasses and looked over her shoulder. "'So kind of you, Professor Schafer.' It was a shame for Ellen and me to enjoy it all to ourselves!"

"So your jokes kind of fell flat?" asked Hilary with a mischievous look.

"Yes," answered Isabel, "after all our trouble to find that kitten, and me coaxin' Cathalina half a day more or less!"

"But maybe we've started a real romance," suggested Eloise.

"What did you do with the kitty?" asked Cathalina.

"It's all right. Dotty Banks, one of the little girls, was to watch for it and take it back if necessary, and she showed me a long fresh scratch it gave her, so I guess she caught it all right!"

"I'm glad it turned out as it did," said Cathalina later, as she and Hilary were at their lessons. "We aren't allowed to play practical jokes at home. If it had—a—mortified her at all, I'd have felt guilty, although," and here Cathalina's lips set firmly a moment,—"she deserves 'most anything for the way she does in class."

"Father says that when we try to pay back it hurts us the worst," replied Hilary. "I'm not preaching, please, but such pranks take a lot of time and aren't so very smart or funny in the end. Let's try to keep out of them. If you could get hold of Isabel, Cathalina, you would do her a lot of good. She and Avalon just about worship you."

CHAPTER IX.

GOSSIP.

As the days went by, Cathalina became accustomed to her new surroundings and the school routine, with the stimulating life in the midst of much young companionship. Yet no one knew just what it cost her to overcome her timidity. She was, to be sure, not the only young girl at Greycliff who was learning lessons of self-reliance, and the very knowledge of that fact helped her. Pride, also, came to the rescue. She was not going to appear like a dunce, not she! And as confidence grew, she discovered that many even of the older girls, for all the superior years and wisdom for which she had given them credit, could not recite as correctly as she, nor cared, apparently, to use their brains in thinking things out.

"Why, Helen," she said one day to Helen Paget, as they came together from Randolph, where their Literature class had been reciting, "Victoria Parker did not even blush when she made that awful mistake today."

"O, she really hasn't enough sense, Cathalina, to know how bad it was, and doesn't care anyhow. She's one of the 'Simps'. Her father sent her here, I heard, because she was so silly and he was afraid she might run away to be married."

"It wouldn't have been so bad if we had not just been studying George Eliot. The way she rattled it off, that Adam Bede was an English monk and was called the venerable Bede!"

"But you ought to hear her recite in French or Latin, Cathalina. She doesn't think it needs to make sense and takes any meaning that she can find in the dictionary for the words and strings them together. We just nearly die when she recites. You can imagine what a fit Dr. Carver takes over her Latin recitations, and the French teacher has all she can do to keep her face straight sometimes."

"Who is the French teacher?—there are several of the teachers on the platform at Chapel that I don't know yet."

"Madame Dumont. She is wonderful, a perfect dear! The girls work their heads off for her. She's a native, you know, and goes over home every summer. But she's terribly worried since the war started in August, you know. She had a son and other people in it, of course. You must meet her. She'd only be too delighted since you can talk with her."

"It would be wonderful for me, only I'm afraid of making mistakes. But what did you mean by 'simps'?"

"Can't you guess?"

"Simpletons?"

"Yes. She and that queer girl that she is always with were rather snippy to Diane and me and called us the "Imps", so we sometimes call them the 'S'Imps', with our crowd, of course."

"Victoria is quite pretty," said Cathalina.

"Yes; she looks just like one of those yellow-haired dolls that I used to have. Pearl is rather stunning, with those big black eyes. But the way they both dress! And it would be worse if Miss Randolph did not tell us all occasionally what to wear. The first time they came down to dinner last year, Pearl had on a blue silk evening dress with a train, and Victoria wore a fussy lace and chiffon dress with satin slippers to match."

"I suppose," remarked Cathalina, thoughtfully, "that it isn't criminal not to know that George Eliot wrote 'Adam Bede', or not to be able to translate a foreign language. Lots of good people don't know either, I guess."

"O, of course," Helen laughed. "I can forget history over night. But I don't know what these girls do care for that amounts to anything. I reckon"—and Helen's drawl was much in evidence,

"our fathehs and mothes want us to get our lessons paht of the time anyway! They say that Pearl has a silly motheh that wants huh to be 'in society' and huh fatheh wo'ks his head off to get money enough foh them. He was here one time, a kind-looking man, not very much fixed up, and Pearl acted as if she felt ashamed of him!"

"Victoria has been real nice to me."

"That is because"—but Helen stopped and changed the reference she was going to make to the style and daintiness of Cathalina's clothes to "well, I feel sorry for Vic. She hasn't any mother. She has more common sense, too, in some ways than Pearl."

That very day, after study hours, it chanced that Cathalina had callers. Hilary was off with some of the girls, but Cathalina had a theme to write and since genius had begun to burn, was scribbling away at a great rate.

A light tapping came at the doors and a rather pretty voice called, "Is Miss Van Buskirk at home?"

"She is," replied Cathalina pleasantly, opening the door to admit two beruffled and befurbelowed young ladies of the Junior Collegiate classes, Victoria Parker and Pearl Opal Taylor.

Victoria's flaxen locks were puffed and waved and frizzled. She was short and plump, her arms and hands fair and pretty, for Victoria would not

risk her white skin in any of the athletic sports. A wide gold bracelet, long earrings, and half a dozen finger rings were her chief ornaments. She sank gracefully into a chair, patting her puffs and turning the bracelet right side before.

Pearl was tall and thin. Much powder and careless eating had had its effect already upon her dark complexion, but she added more powder and even a bit of rouge upon occasion, though not when in the presence of her teachers. Her stylish silk frock was adorned with braid and beads and dabs of color until it almost made Cathalina's eyes ache.

"I undehstand that you home is in N'Yawk, Miss Van Buskirk," simpered Victoria, after the exchange of greetings was completed and the three were settled for a visit.

"Yes, we have always lived there, though Father's people came from near Troy. But don't call me Miss Van Buskirk. I am not grown up yet."

"But you have quite an air about you, and as you recite with us in literature,—"

"Mother wants me to be a little girl as long as possible, she says."

"O, indeed! When will she let you come out?"

"O, we aren't that kind of people. We don't give balls and big affairs as a rule. We have lovely family parties, and nice teas and dinners with our friends."

"Do you know Nora Perry?" asked Pearl abruptly.

"No, I think not; though it is hard to remember whom I have met—there are so many."

"She is in our class," said Virginia, forgetting to drop her r's. "She told me that she was going to take the first opportunity to call on you because she thinks it was your brother that she met at Virginia Beach last summer."

"Very likely," said Cathalina, thinking "poor Phil!"

"O, then you do have a brotheh?" continued Victoria, brightening. "Is he quite a little older than you?"

"Several years."

"Nora was saying that your father is vary wealthy and that you could have all the clothes and jewelry you wanted." This came from Pearl, and even Victoria frowned at the remark.

Cathalina froze a little at this and said, "Mother says that there is nothing people are so often mistaken about as other people's money, and, anyway, she thinks it isn't in good taste for little girls like me to have fussy clothes."

By this time Cathalina was very much tried; but she wanted to be polite and finally succeeded in getting away from clothes, her own private affairs and boys to interest them in some other things. They

asked many questions about New York and talked volubly about their own experiences of the summer. When at last the dinner gong released Cathalina, the two birls went away happily, thinking that they must have made quite an impresison upon "that little Van Buskirk girl".

As Cathalina went to the bureau to choose a fresh hair ribbon, she picked up her mother's picture in its ivory frame. "There is the 'real article, all wool and a yard wide', as Father says. She looks just as she does at Father when he comes home, tender and glad to see him,—bless her! My, I'm thankful for the kind of a home I have!" and Cathalina was thinking neither of its elegance or wealth. "I never realized it, nor was half thankful enough. Those poor girls! I wish I could do something for Victoria; she has a kind, pleasant way, after all." But Cathalina shook her head doubtfully. "Nineteen and such ideas!" For Cathalina, who did not realize the changes taking place in her own ideas of life, thought nineteen quite too late for an awakening.

After dinner, as Cathalina left the dining room, she happened to be near Miss Randolph, who slipped her hand through Cathalina's arm.

"How are you, dear child?" she asked. "I have been too busy to look after you properly, but I have

watched your cheeks get rosy, and the bright face you carry. Have you been homesick?"

"Not much, Miss Randolph,—it's all so interesting and I know the nicest girls!"

"I have a letter from your Aunt Knickerbocker and another from your mother, and before I reply I would like a little visit and talk with you. Suppose we take our Sunday evening lunch together in my rooms." And with a kind look, Miss Randolph went on her way, leaving Cathalina.

"Somebody is terribly intimate with 'Ellen'," said one of the girls who did not like Miss Randolph and now included in her displeasure "that stuck up Van Buskirk girl".

Hilary, who happened to be near, replied, "Her aunt is a friend of Miss Randolph's."

Cathalina just then joined Hilary and with a group of girls they wandered out to the porch seats.

"Does Miss Randolph teach anything?" inquired Hilary.

"No," one of the older girls replied. "She did a year or so ago, but was too busy and gave it up. She taught History of Art and was a perfectly grand teacher, the girls say."

"I'm scared to death every time she looks at me!" said Isabel Hunt, who perched on the balustrade and swung one nervous foot. "I wonder if my hair is frowzy or the button I sewed on my waist

matches, or the one I didn't sew on will be missed. I'm sure she can see clear through me!"

"Why how funny!" exclaimed Cathalina. "I never thought of it."

"That is because you are always as neat as a pin."

"I wish I 'wuz'," and Cathalina laughed as she thought of various hurried occasions when she had longed for Etta. "Hilary, I'm wrongfully accused! Come to the rescue!"

Hilary made big eyes and said in a stage whisper, "Never reveal it,—but Miss Buskirk was known to rush off to early class one morning with a great tear in her petticoat, pinned for a yard around,—more or less!"

"Fie, fie!" cried Isabel. "I feel better!"

"And you ought to have seen her, Isabel, when she came back from her first ride on old Poky! You wouldn't think Poky's going could jolt anybody, would you?"

"She galloped awfully," interrupted Cathalina, while the girls laughed.

"Cathalina did not have a hairpin or a ribbon left! Her hat was over one ear, her hair flying—well, I will spare her the rest! ever there was a girl in distress she was it!"

"Well, I *was* in distress. That old riding teacher showed everybody how but me!"

"He probably thought that anybody on Poky didn't need any showing."

"Hilary, how you do rub it in!" said Isabel, reaching over to pat Cathalina, who was not minding it at all.

"She appealed to me!" urged Hilary in self-defense.

"That was the way my oldest brother taught me to swim," Isabel continued. "He took me out to where I couldn't stand and began to be floated off,—'n when I was yellin'—'Jimmy, take me out,' the wretch swam off with 'strike out, Izzy'!"

"O, my," gasped Avalon, "what did you do?"

"Well, you see I'm here," and Isabel grinned at Avalon, who looked sheepish.

"Putty!" said one of the girls. "I happen to know that Isabel had been practicing for a month and could float anyway. All she needed was confidence in herself."

"Don't spoil a good story," said Isabel.

"Did you ever hear why Miss Randolph never got married?" asked Diane, going back to the first subject of conversation.

"No; why?"—and the whole group leaned forward to catch the first word of romance.

"She wasn't asked!" replied Diane mischievously, and was rewarded by groans from all quarters.

"Mean thing!"

"No, sir!" Isabel exclaimed. "There is a real love story about Miss Randolph. She was going to marry a young professor of oratory. You know what a lovely voice she has, so rich and deep sometimes it gives you the shivers in Chapel when she prays!"

"Thrills, you mean," corrected Hilary.

"Well, anyway, this young man heard her voice in another room at a party and went in to hunt it up—oratory, you know,—and found Miss Randolph and fell in love at first sight."

"Sound, you mean," softly suggested the same mentor.

"You're awful smart, Hilary Lancaster," grinned Isabel, "who's telling this?—And they picked out their furniture and he had a dandy job at some school, and she had the love-li-est clothes, and—"

"O, don't say that he died!" exclaimed Cathalina.

"No, he didn't,—that was the worst of it." The girls laughed here.

"Well, which would you rather if you were engaged, have him died and still love you, or have something happen and maybe somebody else get him?"

Nobody seemed to be able to decide the question.

"Just before the time to send out the invitations, something happened. Nobody ever knew what. She wouldn't say a word, except that the engage-

ment was broken. She went to Europe and studied art and things, and I suppose he went to his old school."

"You seem to be sure that it was all his fault. Are you so fond of Miss Randolph?"

"Well, I always feel guilty when she's around, but then that isn't her fault, and I can't imagine her ever doing anything wrong."

"Who told you all that, Isabel? I don't believe a word of it."

"Annabel Wright, in the elocution class. Her people came from the same town, in Virginia. Just ask her."

"Funny Cathalina never heard of it."

"O, no; Aunt Katherine wouldn't speak of it if she knew."

Not a girl of this group failed to look at Miss Randolph the next time she saw her with a new interest because she had had a lover! But it was hard to believe that any one so calm and cheerful could have had the note of tragedy in her life.

CHAPTER X.

HILARY'S BIRTHDAY BOX.

A CURIOUS friendship had sprung up between Cathalina and Isabel Hunt. Perhaps the first tie was the devotion to Cathalina of Avalon Moore, Isabel's roommate. Then Cathalina was a revelation to Isabel, crude, motherless little girl that she was. For Isabel had been brought up by a father troubled about business affairs, by a queer old cousin who kept house, and by four older brothers.

"No wonder Isabel talks as carelessly as she does, Mamma," wrote Cathalina. "I could not bear her at first. But she has the dearest, warmest heart, and is such a little wild rose of a thing, with her curly hair and rosy cheeks, that I've changed my mind. Miss Randolph said that she is 'a dear little girl that ought to have more love and care.' She and Avalon hang around our 'bunch', as Isabel calls us, as much as possible and are delighted to make themselves useful.

"Now, dearest Mothery, don't forget what I told you about Hilary's birthday. Please let me give

her something nice, won't you? I'll run the risk of her feeling 'under obligation'. She is such a dear and has been so lovely to me. I'll never even tell her before *my* birthday. Besides, my birthday does not come in school time. Hilary will be sixteen! I'm glad she is older than I; I've depended upon her a lot. She knows so much more about people, someway, than I do. Her mother is going to send her a birthday box and I'm ever so curious to see what a real birthday box at school is like."

The "bunch" to which Cathalina referred was the the group of girls who lived for the most part on Lakeview Corridor. It was not a "clique", exclusive, but merely the usual drawing together of a merry group that chanced to become better acquainted through association in classes or some personal attraction to each other. But there were other nice girls on this corridor and elsewhere, with whom in time Cathalina and Hilary formed many pleasant friendships.

Three exciting events were on for the last week of October: Hilary's birthday, the election of captain for the Junior (Academy) basketball team, and the Hallowe'en masquerade. Tongues were gabbling and fingers flying on costumes in the interesting hours between recitation, study hours, mealtime and bed-time. Lights were rarely out on time and many were the dread reproofs from teachers on

the different corridors. Cathalina was on the committee for the Hallowe'en performance, while Hilary was deep in the interests of basketball. She was "out for the team" and the recipient of confidences on all sides.

On the day of her birthday, Hilary was flying down the hall, tapping at different doors.

Isabel's brown curls lifted from the remarkable costume on which she was sewing with unaccustomed fingers. "Where's Avalon?" Hilary asked, as she held the door part way open.

"She has not been up since lunch."

"Then invite her for me, please, when she comes in. I want both of you to come to our feast tonight. I am to have a box from home if nothing happens. It is to arrive this afternoon, so the things will be fresh. If it *should* be delayed, we'll have the feast tomorrow."

"O, goody!—you're a duck, Hilary. I'll be delighted and so will Avalon. It's awfully good of you to invite us with the big girls!" Isabel jumped up, dropping scissors and work on the floor, while she ran to take Hilary's face in her two hands and kiss her. "Many happy returns!

Hilary looked embarrassed, for she "wasn't much at kissing."

"Be sure to come," she said hospitably, as she vanished to tap at the next door. "What in the

world is this!" and Hilary pretended to start back in fright. A fierce growl greeted this question, as Diane in a bear's costume, to which Helen had been putting a few last stitches, sat up, waved brown paws and started a rolling dance.

"Isn't it good?" asked Helen.

"Great!" Hilary replied, clapping her hands in applause.

"This, ladies and gentlemen, is the only Cinnamon-Black Bear in captivity," said Helen, as she slipped into a rough coat and adjusted a man's slouch hat over her eyes. "Here is his chain." She threw a long iron chain around Diane's neck. "This is the worst place to get anything. I wish Miss Randolph would let us go to the city for costumes."

"She said we'd have just as much fun with inexpensive things. But I'm forgetting my errand. Cathalina Van Buskirk and Hilary Lancaster will be at home this evening at eight o'clock and will be happy to see Miss Diane Percy, Helen Paget, Miss Lilian North, and Miss Betty Barnes at that time,—very promptly—if we don't send for you to help before!"

"Don't worry. We wouldn't miss it. Has the box come?"

"No; but Mother said it would before night, and what Mother can't put through has not yet been discovered! Miss Randolph said we could sit up a

while after 'lights out', so we can have a good time and not hurry. Yum-yum, I know Uncle Andrew's chickens from Brookdale farm will be in it!"

"Did you say 'CHICKENS'? in the *plural?*" asked Diane in deep and husky tones, while she made her eyes big and waved her claws again.

"Ow! Let me escape, fierce beast!" and Hilary disappeared.

As Hilary came into the room, Cathalina, who like all the rest was industriously sewing, pointed with a smile to the birthday box, just deposited near the table by the janitor. The top was open and the nails carefully drawn from the boards.

"Hooray!" cried Hilary. "But I'm not going to take a thing out till after dinner."

"How can you wait so long?"

"Because I think it will be fun to take it all out at once, and it will spoil our appetites to nibble at things,—and how could we help it?—and then, Mother has packed that box and I know that the eats and everything are in glorious shape. They'll be better to stay as they are until we are ready. I hope the girls won't eat much at dinner."

"If I were Pearl Opal I'd exclaim—'eat much? here?' "

"Poor Pearl! How she hates it here!"

"When are you going to have the feast, Hilary?"

"About half-past eight or nine o'clock, though

it's supposed to be a 'midnight feast'. We'll begin to borrow dishes and fix up soon after dinner. Won't it be jolly? It isn't every girl that can be at Greycliff and have a birthday and a big box from home."

"A little package came to me, too," said Cathalina, putting down her work and going into the bedroom. In a moment she appeared with a little black leather case.

"O, what did they send you?" asked generous Hilary, who was always glad for the good fortune of others. Cathalina opened the case. There on soft ivory satin lay a delicate gold chain with an exquisite little pendent of opals and tiny diamonds.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Hilary, looking closely.

"Try it on," Cathalina invited, her eyes dancing.

"Isn't it the sweetest thing, Cathalina! It will be so pretty with all your low-necked dresses."

"Yes it—won't, Miss Hilary," replied Cathalina, who could not wait any longer. Putting her arm about Hilary, she held the hands that were beginning to unfasten the clasp. "It's yours, girlie, with 'many happy returns'. I had Mamma get your birthstones, for it's lucky, they say for October girls to wear opals." Cathalina laughed at Hilary's astounded look. "I hope that you will enjoy it and remember your old goose of a roommate when you wear it."

"You old darling!—but I can't, really, it's too nice,—opals and diamonds!"

"It isn't much, honestly. I wanted Mamma to get something nicer, but she knew best, I suppose."

"What *could* be nicer? O! It is so lovely!" and Hilary looked in the mirror again. "It surely is a surprise. I don't feel I ought to have it, but thank you a thousand times!" Hilary hugged the happy Cathalina, who said, "Put on for dinner your white organdy with the V neck and see how this looks with it."

"All right. I'll have to change again, though, can't risk my pretty dress unpacking."

"Grace says that the girls usually wear their kimonos at a late spread." As she spoke, Cathalina smiled, thinking what her mother would say if she saw her daughter in the big figured kimono which she had purchased at the Greycliff Heights "emporium". Her lacy negligee she had found scarcely suitable for Greycliff "stunts".

Lessons, Gym practice, dinner, committee meetings and a turn outdoors were all over at last. Hilary's "sparkler", as Isabel called it, had been duly admired and commented on by dozens of girls. She and Cathalina flew up to their suite and were joined by Isabel and Avalon, who had begged to be allowed to help.

"We'll get the dishes all ready before we unpack

the box. Then we can set the goodies right on the table, Isabel. Will you please go to 57 and borrow the girls' kettle for the cocoa?"

"I'll make that," offered Avalon. She was taking domestic science and welcomed a chance to practice.

"All right; I brought up the milk and put it out on the window ledge. And I wonder if you wouldn't help gather up dishes now. Run around to Grace and Eloise first. With theirs and those from fifty-one, and ours, of course, we'll have enough, I think. O, yes,—tell 'em to bring what spoons they have." So directed Hilary.

Books and papers were piled on window sills and floor. Whisk went the table runner and Cathalina came trotting with a dust cloth. A clean dresser scarf and paper napkins made sufficient covering for the table, and a pile of wooden plates was placed on one end. "Now let's see," pondered Hilary. "Two can sit on the cedar chest here, three on your new box, Cathalina," whirling around a light box which had been another purchase at the Emporium, and contained little of weight as yet. "That's five, and four chairs, nine; and when the box is empty it can stand on end with a cushion on it. A few chairs from Lil's will finish out nicely."

"What's the matter with cushions on the floor?"

"O, well, we're having more than light refreshments and I'm afraid it would get tiresome."

Bright pink spots burned on Hilary's cheeks as she hurried around to get everything ready. Then she began to draw one package after another out of the birthday box. First came a flat paper box, which contained some acceptable little gifts for the sixteen-year-old daughter. Within the tissue paper lay some bright hair ribbons, a pair of kid gloves, a dainty handkerchief and some fragrant sachets made by June from satin ribbon. These were admired by the girls who stood or sat near, but they were much more interested in the rest of the contents. A birthday letter Hilary slipped into her belt to read presently.

"Look, girls, the big box in the middle has the chicken, I know!" Hilary lifted the lid and disclosed tempting pieces of fried chicken well wrapped in oiled paper. "Please take them out, Isabel, and arrange on some of the wooden plates, on a paper napkin, you know."

"How many chickens do you suppose your mother cooked? Here's nothing but breast and second joints and nice things."

"They're having chicken pie on the remains," said Hilary laughing. Here's some of June's famous salad, two quart cans,—and do you like blackberry jelly, Avalon? Good, two glasses. That is all I was afraid of that there wouldn't be enough of the little

things for the crowd. But Mother knew little Hilary!"

A big birthday cake, candles in a box; nut bread; pimento and cheese sandwiches; country butter; fresh rolls, home-made; a package of June's fudge and "divinity"; cream candies, made with fondant; a large candy box of blanched almonds and hickory nut meats; olives and fine homemade pickles, all came in quick succession from that still famous box. In the corners and around about were tucked oranges and red and golden apples. The girls shook every scrap of paper for fear they might miss something. "And everything so wonderfully packed!" they exclaimed. As the table was not large enough to hold it all, the cake and other goodies for dessert were carried into the other room and the top of the dresser cleared to hold them.

"I feel like a little piggy-hog," sighed Isabel, looking at the table full of good things.

"Help yourselves," said Hilary, turning to the book-shelves and then passing a box of chocolates which had reposed there, having arrived from Aunt Hilary that morning.

"One chocolate and a pickle is my limit," Avalon decided, and turned her back on the table to enjoy those delicacies. "We must save our appetites for the chicken. We can buy candy, but where can we

ever get chicken like that?" Avalon, long over her homesickness, was almost as full of life as Isabel.

"Now for the cocoa, Avalon,—I'll help." Cathalina's housewifely instincts supplied what experience lacked and she found that she liked to fuss around after this fashion.

Then the guests began to arrive. Diane Percy, Helen Paget, Lilian North, Betty Barnes, Grace Barnard, Eloise Winthrop and two newer friends, Juliet Howe and Pauline Tracy, came in, one or two at a time. Juliet and Pauline, like Hilary, were "out" for basketball. Both were active, athletic girls. Pauline, known as "Polly", was a plump, rather solid looking girl, with round cheeks, full, pleasant mouth, quantities of long black hair, steady grey eyes, and strong, capable looking hands, equally efficient for basketball, tennis, and rowing, or for driving, and cooking for hungry cowboys on the ranch from which she came. "She can do even more than Hilary, Betty says," wrote Cathalina to her mother. Cathalina had never met a girl just like Pauline, and was much interested in everything about her. Juliet was known as Polly's Shadow, partly because of their intimacy. She was almost Polly's twin in complexion, hair and eyes, but was tall and thin, with long, slender face. Swiftness and general activity were her particular recommendations for basketball.

Grace came in the dress which she had worn to dinner and was sent back by Isabel for a kimono. "Nobody can come without a wedding garment," cried she, picking up a last piece of oiled paper to tuck in the waste basket, and bringing a cushion for the wooden box, which she had set on end. "Come one, come all!"

"All right, kiddie," said Grace, looking around with amusement at the gay garments, "I'll be glad enough to get into one."

"Now excuse me just a minute while I read my letter. I can't wait any longer. I was not expecting to find one in the box or I would have unpacked it before. You can pass the candy and pickles again, girls, as an appetizer. Grace will be back in a minute."

So Hilary ran into the bedroom, carrying her precious birthday letter with its words of praise for past days and blessings and good cheer for the days to come. She also opened a second package. from Aunt Hilary, taking out a silk workbag, all fitted out with scissors, new thimble and all the accessories. "Look, girls," she said, going back to her guests, "this is one thing that we did not get ready last summer. I brought my old work box."

Such exclamations as there had been when each guest had caught sight of the table. Betty Barnes, perched on the wooden box, shook her head when

asked to take a more comfortable seat. "Thank you, this is so handy to the table!" With her little slippered feet she beat at tattoo against the boards as she ate the pickle for which Hilary well knew each girl's mouth would water. Betty was in high spirits and all the girls in gay humor. In a few minutes Avalon and Cathalina arrived with the steaming kettle of cocoa, and after some skirmishing around for the proper number of cups, plates and paper napkins, the feast began, much later than planned, but as the girls all said, the later the better!

CHAPTER XI.

AT HILARY'S SPREAD.

SMILING faces and figures with the grace and freedom of youth made the small room seem very cosy and full of good cheer. It was remarkable how, in spite of the disappearance of food, conversation never flagged. In fact, it often occurred that several were talking at once.

"Mother wrote," said Hilary, "that our good friend, uncle Andy Short,—everybody calls him 'Uncle'—brought in the chickens all ready, dressed and wouldn't take a cent. He said 'I don't suppose those girls ever get a good square meal there.' He just adores Father and heard in some way about the birthday box."

"How grand to be a minister's daughter!"

"Dear Uncle Andy!"

"No joking,—he is just fine. They haven't any children, so they're nice to other people's. It's great out on their big farm, five hundred acres, Father says."

"What cannibals we are!" Lilian remarked. "I'm going to stop chicken and begin on some of the other things if I can. Look at my plate, Hilary,—I accepted everything that was passed!"

"May we have dessert tomorrow, Hilary?" asked Grace, looking in mock despair from her plate to the beautiful birthday cake just brought in.

"How many girls are out for basketball, Pauline?" asked Eloise.

"About fifteen, I think."

"That is pretty good, isn't it?" asked Lilian. "There are only twenty-four Juniors altogether."

"How many are chosen?" Cathalina had never seen a game, but was beginning to be interested.

"Six," replied Juliet. "Girls have two centers,—so it will be easier for them. Boys have only one. The floor is divided differently, too. You will see."

"Come down, Cathalina, and watch us some day," said Pauline, "before the games come off. You will understand it better. And that makes me think—how many of you here are playing now?—You, Di, and Hilary and Grace,—"

"I haven't any chance for the team," said Grace, "but I like to play for the fun of it."

"That is the way with me," said Lilian, "but I don't see how Di and Hilary can help being on it, and Polly and Juliet, of course. They played last year, Cathalina."

"But you have a vote just the same, and I wanted to tell you that the silly 'Fudge Club' want to get Florence Day elected captain. We all know that Hilary ought to be elected Captain."

"O, Pauline would be better, girls!" cried Hilary promptly and sincerely.

"Thanks, Hilary," said Pauline. "I do think I understand the game, but I am not as good a leader. Hilary has the head for emergencies."

"Don't quarrel, children!" Betty pretended to part Pauline and Hilary, who sat close together on the cedar chest. "Polly told me some time ago that Hilary was a big surprise to the girls in basket-ball and that she ought to be elected Captain. Florence is a good player, but she isn't equal to Hilary. She goes all to pieces sometimes, and isn't always fair besides. Everybody can count on Hilary all the time, they say."

"Hear, hear!" applauded the girls.

"Is this politics?" inquired Isabel.

"No, indeed," replied Pauline. "I just wanted to warn you about some. If Hilary were my own sister and not the best one I would not vote for her. The point is to win!"

"Who elects the Captain?" asked Cathalina again.

"The whole crowd of girls out for the team. Then the captain goes to work to train them all

and later the coach chooses the best players for the team."

"I see," said Cathalina looking wise.

"Well, what happens at Greycliff after that?" Avalon continued the questioning, and Juliet replied this time

"The class games come on first, in the Academy and in the Collegiate classes, too. We fight hard in our class games and most of our interest is in them, because we hardly ever beat the big girls. If we did we'd have a chance at games with another school. Don't I wish it would be the Juniors this time!"

"Rah, rah, Juniors, Greycliff!"—and Pauline waved a wishbone.

Juliet went on: "We usually play against the Highland Seminary girls,—only twenty miles away. Lots of us go over to root for our team, or they come here."

"They call themselves the Highlanders," added Helen, "and wear Scotch colors. The last time they came here they got hold of an old Scotchman who could play the bagpipe and brought him along. It was something awful to hear and actually fussed our girls. They beat us, too. Wasn't it awful, Pauline?" Helen shook her head at the sad memory.

"I should think so! Miss Randolph did not like the bagpipes any too well, either. The Highlanders had a young chaperone and had the Scotchman join them here. Miss Randolph did not know that, of course, till afterwards, so put up with it."

"They are our deadliest rivals, Cathalina," explained Eloise.

"Do they usually beat?" Cathalina inquired innocently.

"I should say not! I'm sure that we are at least two games ahead!" cried Pauline, in some excitement.

"Nice old Polly! Polly want a cracker?" said Betty soothingly, offering a piece of cake.

"I wish that Miss Randolph would let us go around to more places," sighed Juliet, stretching forward red slippers and smothering a yawn. "It is such fun."

"Indeed, Juliet, you ought to be thankful you can ever go! It was a long time before Miss Randolph would have *any* games away from home. So they say; and Patricia West told somebody that Miss Randolph thinks 'competitive games' bad for the girls. But I guess she just had to give in for fear ev'rybody would go to the other schools."

"I shouldn't think anybody would want to go anywhere else that ever *saw* Greycliff," said Cathalina, forgetting her own early indifference, though

a bit surprised at her own feeling. "But somehow I hate to think that Miss Randolph would give in to anything she didn't think right. I can't believe it!"

"Good for you, Cathalina,—you are a loyal Greycliffer already! And I guess all of us feel that way about Miss Randolph, too." Thus spoke Lilian. "But you know Miss Randolph does not own the school, even if her uncle did give so much money. She can't help some things,—and of course we're all glad about this."

"Let's talk about the Hallowe'en doin's," suggested Avalon. "I can't think of a thing for a costume!"

"Why, Avalon, do forgive me for not telling you. We've changed our plans and it won't be a masquerade,—costumes of a sort, though. I forgot you were having sore throat."

"And I forgot, too, to tell her," said Isabel guiltily.

"What's the new plan, then, Cathalina? Yes, I was over at the pest house two days."

"We're going to have a circus. Wait till I drink the rest of my cocoa and I'll get a list that I have. Everybody has to report to the committee what she's going to be or do. You can get some ideas of what you would like to be."

"You ought to see Di as the performing bear," said Helen.

"What are you?"

"O, I'm the man that leads him around and makes him dance and lets the bear hug him and everything."

"I'm going to run a side show," said Lilian. "How would you like to take tickets?"

"Nothing so tame for me. I'd rather be an animal or a spangled lady."

"Put your wits to work, all of you, and help out the committee with your brilliant ideas. We only have a few days."

"Where are you going to have it?" asked Isabel.

"In the Gym. We're going to charge from one cent up for the different shows and things. It's for the Y. W., you know. So get your money changed up and you can have pink lemonade and peanuts, beside seeing the Greatest Wonders in the World! Wait till we get out our posters tomorrow. All our artists are working on the hand bills!" Cathalina's eyes sparkled as she thought of the funny things that were being made ready, and the girls all laughed at her professional air. "And we don't want the Collegiate girls to beat us being funny. Some of the little graders are going to be too dear!"

"What will you do if everybody wants to be an animal?"

"No danger of that. The costumes are too hard to make."

"I think so!" exclaimed Diane. "Helen and I have worked all week; catch us trying it again! Me for a tight rope performance or something easy!'

Two sleepy girls were left in the suite after the guests had gathered up their kimonos and departed, with promises to come in the next day for a second lunch on the remains. Hilary threw herself into a chair and looked at the table with a comical expression. "That's the mischief! eleven o'clock and all this mess to clear up!" But Cathalina was already gathering up the bones and crumbs, shaking them into one big paper, and putting the good things into the various pasteboard boxes.

"Never mind, Hilary. It's your birthday and you supplied all these lovely eats, so I'll clean up. Go to bed, Hilary. If my mother could only see how I've reformed, she would be proud of her little Cathalina."

Hilary sprang up protesting, and in a twinkle the table was cleared, the embroidered runner and books put back and the soiled china and silver piled in the big cocoa kettle "till tomorrow".

"I'm glad we can't wash the dishes tonight."

"Yes, the fudge room is locked by this time."

"And we'd wake everybody up there or anywhere we were prowling."

"Set the alarm for six, please, Hilary. Isn't it awful? I have to copy a theme before first hour class!"

Twelve restless heads tossed on twelve rumpled pillows. Hilary dreamed that she was playing basketball with a Scotch Highlander eight or ten feet tall, who always managed to get the ball and just reach over to drop it through the basket! Cathalina's dreams took the form of strange animals in cages, clowns and swinging elephants; and once a reproachful looking chicken, as large as an ostrich, stretched his neck between the bars of a gloomy cage and pulled out by the roots a braid of Cathalina's long hair!

CHAPTER XII.

THE HALLOWE'EN CIRCUS.

"HERE's your hot peanuts, only a penny a sack,—right this way, ladies and gentlemen!" a shrill voice was calling.

"Ice-cold pink, yellow and purple lemonade!"

"Coney Island popcorn! Hot Crispetts! Ice-cream candy!"

"Walk up, ladies, and see the only living Wild Man of Borneo!"

"Tickets this way, ladies and gentlemen, to have your fortune told!"

Pandemonium appeared to reign in the big Gym. On buying an entrance ticket for one cent, one secured the privilege of beholding this remarkable scene. "Show Day in Podunk," the committee called it. Most of the girls, costumed either as performers or patrons of the show, took part. A few faculty wives, with Miss Randolph and the other teachers, had received invitations and walked about leading some staring and delighted faculty children.

One end of the big gymnasium had been curtained off and made to look as much as possible like a circus tent. A few booths and stands, and several small tents for "side-shows", constituted the rest of the scenery on which the long-suffering janitor and his assistants had been hammering and fixing all day. The committee had spent much time and thought on the plan and had pressed other girls into service to help with placards and posters.

Cathalina came hurrying in as if afraid she would be late. She wore a yellow sunbonnet, a bright red shoulder shawl and a deep pink calico dress which dipped decidedly in the back. By the hand she dragged a curly-headed boy in knickerbockers. "Naow Tommy," she said loudly, "I can't take you to ev'rything, so be a good boy an' you kin see the animals an' the big show!"

"O, Maw, there's some ice-cream candy! I want a balloon, Maw! Gimme a nickel! Aw, Maw!" and Tommy tugged at his mother's hand. Tommy was Isabel, of course, whose blue shirt-waist and purple tie matched the gaudiness of a plaid velvet cap. She hung back whining, as Cathalina tried to guide her obstreperous child toward the main tent.

Lilian, who had changed her plans, was a farmer in blue jeans, heavy boots, loose blouse, red bandanna handkerchief and a large straw hat. She brought in a large family of boys and girls, the boys in overalls

or knickerbockers and the girls in every variety of dress.

There was the balloon man in ill-fitting attire. His balloons were quite popular and were to be seen bobbing all over the room. "Toot" went the whistle. Girls dressed as children blew out paper snakes or other things supposed to be dear to the childish heart. Some bought "come-back" balls or supplied themselves with squawkers with which to make night hideous. Country beaux threw confetti at coquettish lasses, fearfully and wonderfully decked for the occasion, or took them to have their fortune told. A patent medicine man sold a lotion which he loudly proclaimed as warranted to take off freckles and sunburn "while you sleep". So popular was this, although it called for the quarters, that the supply gave out and he was forced to sell the prescription, a real one, supplied by Evelyn Calvert's Southern Mammy.

"Madame Zitani Will Read Your Past and Foretell Your Future." So read the sign before a little tent. Inside was Eloise, sparkling in a bright scarlet dress with laced bodice. "Lady, I never saw your face before," said she to Cathalina, who, with the never satisfied "Tommy", had entered the tent, "but cross my hand with one simoleon and I will tell your past and reveal your future." Giggling girls stood around while Eloise took Cathalina's

hand, soft and not much like that of the hard-working lady she represented, and made up an extravagant tale of woe.

"But you will overcome all your troubles, have money left you and soon have nothing to do but ride in your automobiles and aeroplanes!"

Cathalina had assumed a wondering expression, nodding her head in assent to every remarkable event of her past life as related by the solemn Eloise. "Listen to that Timmy," cried she.

"Come on, Maw, I want to see the Fat Lady and the Boa Constrictor."

Just then a terrific drumming was heard, and from a side door appeared "Susan's Band". Grace Barnard as drum-major lead the way, with all the motions appropriate to that office and some extra antics. The members of the band wore their regular "gym" bloomers, of which a great many were in evidence tonight, with military coats and hats. These one of the girls had borrowed from her brother, a student in a boys' military school across the lake. Strains of familiar songs and marches were vigorously produced on combs with all the skill which attaches to playing upon that difficult instrument. Accompanied by the clashing of cymbals and drums (which, to tell the truth, sounded much like a combination of spoons and dishpans), they

marched to the entrance of the main tent and were evidence that the performance was about to begin.

"Ten minutes to see the animals, ladies and gents, before the gr-reat performance commences! Two rings! The famous Slinger Brothers on the trapeze! Only three cents admittance! There will be two performances, one right after the other,—so don't all try to get in at once, please!" This last was added in an unprofessional tone as a necessary precaution, for with the entrance of the band, it looked as if the entire house was starting to the show. The herald was supposed to be one of the proprietors of the circus, Mr. Barnum, in fact; but the shade of the real Mr. Barnum would have been much insulted if he could have beheld his representative. Checked black and white knickerbockers (adapted from an old suit skirt), a dark maroon velvet coat, white vest, red necktie, green kid gloves, blue spectacles, a fierce black mustache, silk hat and a cane, were striking features of his outfit. Girls and teachers had to look twice before they recognized a quiet girl of the upper class, who had been known chiefly by good work in the class-room. Her dark hair was turned straight up under the silk hat and gave a bobbed effect.

"Come, Mrs. Goodman," invited Miss Randolph laughing at and with the startling looking showman who could not keep his face straight, but took off

his hat and bowed low to the ladies as they approached. "Let us see what kind of a performance the girls have."

The curtains were parted for them as they paid over their pennies, and they entered a space where there was sawdust scattered upon the floor with a little hay and a few cages made from boxes. Three remarkable elephants were swinging long trunks about. "Don't lean on me so hard, please," whispered the front section of elephant to the rear section. "My back is 'most broken," was the reply, "and I'm nearly smothered!"

"Make a breathing hole here, and I'll try to stand it if you can't help leaning all your weight on me!"

It was not all joy, apparently, to be transformed into a circus animal, but "anything for Y. W. and a little fun", as the girls said. It was just as well that all the cages were labeled.

A semicircle of seats, in two tiers, had been made of boards nailed to boxes, somewhat insecurely, it seemed to the ladies as they climed upon them. "I can't tell which is more amusing," said the professor's wife to Miss Randolph, "audience or performers." She waved her hand as she spoke at a row of supposed small boys on the front circle. They sat with open mouths, or passed sacks of peanuts and popcorn to each other.

"The girls are pretty good at this," replied the principal. "Those two clowns coming out are Collegiate Seniors, Maxine Burton and Gertrude Mather."

"Now, Titus," said clown number one pompously, as he placed his hand upon a large wooden box in the center of the sawdust ring, "do you see this incubator?"

"Yes, suh," replied clown number two, hideous with red and white paint and a clown's suit much beruffled and gathered.

"And the egg that I now put in?"

"Yes, suh."

"In exactly two minutes after I turn the crank, the whole process is complete and the chicken will appear. This incubator is the greatest invention of the age,—by Thomas Edison, ladies and gentlemen!"

Faint jeers and one quickly suppressed call of "chestnuts" came from the front row; but the ringmaster started in the direction of the "small boys" and the disturbance subsided.

"Br-rr-rr! Br-rr-rr!"

"Now I open the door, like this,—"

"Oooh-oo-ooh-oo-*ooh*-oo-oo!" With a great flapping and crowing, an immense rooster of decidedly human characteristics hopped out and flopped around

amid loud manufactured applause, while clown number two pretended to faint and was carted off by two circus hands on one of the trucks used by the janitor for trunks.

A few more rather silly imitations of circus jokes followed, for busy girls could not be expected to be too original; then the elephants were announced, by the ringmaster, who wore a black velvet riding suit. This elegant gentleman cracked a whip and strode around in true histrionic style.

"Any little boy or girl who wants to may now have a ride on the elephant. These are the most docile elephants in captivity!"

In came the elephants, led by a deeply dyed native clad in a silk turban and a flowing kimono appropriately draped. They came slowly by necessity.

("Now, when I step with my right foot, you step with your left, and then it will look natural. "Thus spoke the first section of elephant.

"Well, how can I do it? It joggles so!" returned rear section.)

"Now, what little boy will come first?" asked the ring-master in honeyed tones.

One of the fattest little boys in the front row came ambling shyly out, his fingers in his mouth.

"That's nice, Johnny; which elephant do you want to ride on?"

The nearest elephant reared around dangerously, so Johnny pointed to the next one. That also began to caper, if elephants can be said to caper, while rear section, peeping out, said to front section, "That's Mabel Smith; I couldn't hold her on my back a minute. I don't know how much she weighs. Why didn't they think to take some of the real little girls for this!"

"They wanted to be in Tom Thumb's party!"

Owing to the press of school duties, this scene had not been rehearsed with the elephants, but to their relief, a strident voice from the audience called sharply, "Johnny Jones, come back here! You know it ain't safe to ride on elephants!" A lady apparently of the deadly variety came stalking forth to lead away her venturesome offspring.

"O, yes, ladies and gents, it is perfectly safe!" the ringmaster assured the audience, whereat Cathalina brought little "Tommy" into the ring.

Now Tommy forgot that he had been warned to ascend carefully, and inspired by the occasion, placed one hand on the back of the elephant and vaulted lightly and easily up.

Crash! The elephant fell in, Tommy and all!—while to cover the confusion the band hastily marched from the side to the front and played strains from "Teddy in Africa", with the appropriate bangs and

explosions. Meanwhile the sections of elephant were reunited and Tommy, covered with sawdust, was dusted off. There followed a really fine exhibition by four of the most graceful gymnasts in the collegiate classes. They went through the different feats learned by long practice under the "gym" teacher, and added the bows, waves and smirks of circus performers.

The little girls, of course, had longed to dress up as grown folks. It was Cathalina's bright idea to have them appear as midgets. They came on next and proved one of the most popular features of the evening, a surprise, for in the earlier part of the evening they had sold lemonade and popcorn and were dressed as butterflies.

Next and last came a trained pig performance. The clever girl who managed this brought in all sorts of jokes upon the girls present. The pig proved to be a remarkable speller! It had been intended to have a lion taming act and a rope-walking "stunt", but, alas, it was necessary to get through by bedtime.

Hilary, who had been in the band, declared her voice ruined by the efforts of the evening.

"O, Cathalina," yawned Isabel, as they all ascended in the elevator, "I wish I *'wuz'* somebody's little boy to be put to bed!"

"I'll do it, Tommy," offered Cathalina, who was herself ready to drop.

"Thank you, my dear young 'maw', but you will go straight to your downy couch. Goodnight, ladies!" and Isabel ran clumping in her heavy shoes, like the boy she looked, down the corridor to her room.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MYSTERIOUS GIRL.

Pretty little Cathalina was buried deep in a big velvet chair in one of the parlors, looking out at the first snow which was swirling down and bid fair to cover everything before morning. The heavy clouds had threatened snow before dinner when she and Hilary had taken a long walk, down to the beach, up through the grove and to the hill beyond. It was quite dark now, but the porch light shone out to where the masses of shrubbery were growing heavy with their soft burden and dark pine trees were being outlined in white.

Cathalina's chair had happened to be turned with its back toward the room, though it was on one side of the long French window. It was nearly time for the evening study bell and the groups of girls that had been chatting in the parlors or gathered about the piano had disappeared. Cathalina felt that she must rouse herself from her rather drowsy comfort and get upstairs to work on her lessons, when from behind her came a quiet footstep and a young girl

in a clinging black dress slipped by the chair and stood in the window. Just then Alma came in and lowered the lights, turning off entirely the electric ones.

Cathalina was rather timid about meeting new people, but very courteous when she had to do so; and now, when she saw that this was the new girl who had only been at Greycliff a few days, she rose from the chair with a pleasant, "Good evening."

The girl started a little and Cathalina went on, "O, excuse me, didn't you see that anybody was there?"

"No," replied the recent arrival, without the courtesy of a smile. She held herself proudly and with her chin raised let her eyes drop from Cathalina's face to her feet with a comprehensive glance.

"I'm sorry if I startled you. My name is Cathalina Van Buskirk. I noticed that you just came a few days ago. I should be glad to be acquainted and if you are the least bit lonely there are some real nice girls here who would love to do anything for you."

"They couldn't do *me* any good," and the tears came to the new girl's eyes, though her expression did not soften! "My father has just been—has just died and Mother made me come here!" There was a pause, while Cathalina wondered what to say. "Did you say your name is Van Buskirk?—from

Holland?" A little interest showed in the girl's face.

"O, no; not from Holland, except long ago when one of my ancestors came over and fought in the Revolution. I'm from New York. I don't think I know your name." Another brief pause. "I'm awfully sorry about your father. But maybe you'll feel happier when you get started in your work and get around with the girls. I was sure that I never could stand it to leave home, but I just love it here now," Cathalina's tender heart was sorry and troubled for this young stranger with her aching heart; though she was somewhat chilled by the girl's attitude.

Just then the study bell rang, and with a bow, like that of one accustomed to a formal life, the new girl left Cathalina and hurried away. Cathalina stopped to pick up a notebook and her fountain pen from the chair in which she had been sitting and then walked thoughtfully upstairs, thinking as she went that she had not learned the name of the newcomer. "Where have I seen somebody like that before?" she wondered. "And that manner?" But when she reached the suite there was a group of girls just leaving for their rooms and the merry chatter put an end to her thoughts about other things.

A few days after this incident, Cathalina, with Betty Barnes, Isabel Hunt, Eloise Winthrop and

Diane Percy were sitting in the window-seat at the head of the front stairs when this girl swiftly passed them and went on downstairs.

"Isn't she a *beautiful* girl?" said Diane.

"Yes, but you can't get acquainted with her," replied Eloise.

"Well, she's just lost her father,—no wonder!" Cathalina said with sympathy.

"Where'd she come from?" asked Isabel.

"Nobody knows. She told one girl Cincinnati, another New York and Miss West said she was from Philadelphia. Did you see them come? The machine had an Ohio tag on it."

"O, did you see her come?"

"Yes; Diane and Grace and I were standing on the porch. They came in a big closed Packard,—she and a woman that looked just like her, except that she had dark hair and a wider face. They weren't expected, I'm sure, and they didn't take out any baggage for a long time and were in Miss Randolph's parlor for over an hour,—we must have been in the library an hour, weren't we, Diane? And when we came back, there they were, coming down the steps. The chauffeur took in a lot of baggage and the girl came out and cried and carried on and would hardly let the woman go. She was in black, too. The chauffeur looked cross, what we

could see of his face, and hustled the woman into the car and pointed the girl to the Hall!"

"I bet he wasn't a chauffeur, then,—must have been one of the family. You don't pay chauffeurs to boss you."

"Listen to Sherlock Holmes! What did he look like, Diane?" Cathalina was much interested.

"I couldn't tell how he looked, except cross, as Eloise says. He had a cap and goggles, you know, and was big and tall—and that's all."

" 'Pome' by Diane Percy: 'Big and tall, and that's all.' "

"I can only talk in rhyme," simpered Diane in falsetto.

Eloise took up the story again: "Miss Randolph came out, then, looking worried, and we went on to our suite. I think she *is* very handsome, as Diane says, but there is something different about her,—I don't know what it is, something that isn't *in* her face and—O, I can't tell what I do mean, but I'm sure I shall never try to make her acquaintance."

"But perhaps that is the very thing she needs," said Cathalina. "I know how you feel when you are shy and sort of proud too,—"

"O, *you,* Cathalina," said Isabel, "you aren't a bit like her. *Your* face is sweet and hers isn't."

Cathalina then told of her experience in the reception room. "We must be nice, anyway, and as

good to her as possible, as she'll let us be. I have a funny feeling that I've seen her somewhere or some one with the same features, but I can't remember."

"Who's her roommate?"

"She is in the single room on the first floor, around at the end of the corridor running west from Miss Randolph's rooms. She just goes around with her head in the air that way all the time, I guess, and unless she gets over it she'll not make many friends."

"Well, let's speak to her when she'll let us. I have an idea that she'll change after a while. I introduced myself, but she did not tell me her name. Do any of you know what it is?"

Nobody did.

"The Mysterious Girl of Single Room Number Blank! Betty, here's our title for that story we have to write in English."

"Betty had hardly said a word during this conversation, but now remarked, "I suppose there are girls here with queer stories in their lives. If we knew them we'd learn a whole lot."

"Yes; maybe it's just as well we don't. But I guess Miss Randolph is very careful about what girls come here. Aunt Knickerbocker said so."

This, Isabel declared, was mystery number one at Greycliff and what was a boarding school without

some mystery? To mystery number two she was introduced that night, by no desire of her own.

The Hall was wrapped in slumber, usually quite profound, for while the girls often grumbled about putting out lights on time, they slept soundly and morning came all too soon. But about midnight Cathalina and Hilary were wakened by a loud shriek that reverberated through the halls and was followed by another; then, silence. Both frightened girls sat up in bed and by one impulse slipped into bath robes and slippers and opened their door, peering out, half afraid but curious, in the corridor. This was dark, lighted only by one dim gas light at the further end. But they could see Avalon's ghostly face at her half open door and Isabel leaning against the wall not far away, her face hidden in her arm. She was shaking all over. "Sh-sh!" said Avalon. her first thought of the teachers.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Hilary in a low voice. "Somebody was screaming to beat the band!"

"O," gasped Isabel, as she heard Hilary's voice, and ran with open arms toward the two girls. "I was just scared to death," she whispered. "O, I'll not sleep one wink this night!"

Cathalina went on toward Avalon, whom she found trembling with fright. "Come over to our

room and tell us what the trouble was. Who screamed?"

"Isabel!"

The girls hurried into suite fifty-two, as if Satan and his legions were after them, while Hilary was torn between a desire to laugh and curiosity to know what was the matter. "Get right into our beds," ordered Hilary. So Avalon with Cathalina and Isabel with Hilary crawled into the twin beds, which proved somewhat narrow for two. "Now tell us."

At this point there came a tap at the outer door and Hilary jumped up to answer it, while Isabel hastily put the covers over her head. "Who is it?" inquired Hilary, as she unlocked the door again.

"Me,—Betty," came the reply in Lilian's voice. "We saw you all go in, and Isabel's door open,—what happened and what was that awful shriek?"

"Come on in, we're just going to hear about it, too. Isabel did the yelling. She was scared to death about something and the girls are in our beds with us. I don't know what we'll do with you!" Hilary laughed and pulled some blankets out of her cedar chest. "Here, take these and pile on the bed. I shut the windows down, but it's pretty chilly."

By this time Isabel had recovered from her first terror and felt strengthened by the number around her. She sat up in Hilary's bed and leaned over toward the other girls to say solemnly, "Well,

girls, you know the 'Woman in Black', don't you? I saw her!"

"Nonsense, Isabel, what is the 'woman in black', a ghost?" This was Hilary, of course.

"You and Betty know about her, don't you?" persisted Isabel, turning to Lilian.

"Why, yes," said Lilian. "There's a tradition at Greycliff about a 'Woman in Black' that walks around the halls sometimes, so they say."

Avalon shivered and Cathalina put an arm around her. "Hurry up and tell us, Isabel. What did she look like and how did you happen to be in the hall or did she come into your room?" Cathalina was laughing, yet it was "sort of spooky", as she admitted later.

"No, she did not come in. Avalon was feeling sick and finally had such a headache that I said I'd get up and go over to see if one of you did not have something that would help her. I didn't want to go up to the third and wake Miss Wood and maybe have Avalon taken to the pest house, and anyhow I don't like these old dark halls. So I was kind of sleepy and didn't turn on the light in our room for fear some teacher would see it—and I just got out into the hall when I heard a sort of moan and something all black and floaty and tall, like a big shadow whisked by me and disappeared around the corner. So there!"

"What's your story, Avalon? Got your headache yet?"

"Not much; scared out of me, I guess. Why, I just heard Isabel scream and went to the door and saw you and Cathalina."

"Maybe it was a thief."

"Or one of the servants."

"Maybe it was the 'mysterious girl'!"

"What would she be doing snooping around on this floor at midnight?"

"It's a wonder all the girls are not awake—the way you screamed, Isabel."

"I couldn't help it. Wouldn't you have screamed too?"

"I suppose I would, or maybe I'd be too frightened to make a sound! But I don't believe it was a 'ghost' or would hurt anybody. Come on, we'd better get to sleep. We'll all take you and Avalon to your room and see that there isn't anybody there and then you can lock your door."

"Wait till I fix Avalon some peppermint and soda," said Hilary. "That's Mother's favorite remedy."

The peppermint and soda taken, a dose for Isabel as well, and the two younger girls were escorted back to their own beds, Avalon tucked in, while Isabel with her flashlight waited to lock the door after the girls had departed. Hilary had wanted to

take flashlights down the halls and look for the 'Woman in Black', but Cathalina said that it would be foolish to do it, for somebody bad might really be about and nobody wanted to find her—or him."

"Do you suppose we ought to wake up one of the teachers, then?" asked Hilary.

"No; I believe Isabel imagined half, or else it was one of the girls that had been sitting up studying and didn't want to be caught or wanted to scare Isabel or something."

But the next morning Alma came to Isabel's room and told her that Miss Randolph wanted to see her right away. Isabel immediately rushed to Cathalina. "O, Cathalina, Alma says I'm to come to Miss Randolph's room right away. What do you suppose she's going to do to me?"

"Nothing, goosey, you haven't done anything wrong."

"But I broke a rule to be out of my room."

"You had a good reason. Just tell her the way you would your own mother—," then Cathalina wished she had not said just that, for Isabel had never even know her mother. "I mean that she is kind and nice."

"Well, anyhow, please,—*please,* Cathalina, go with me!"

"O, that would not do at all if she did not send for me."

"Just to stay outside the door, then!"

The two girls went downstairs together, Isabel to her doom, as she said, and Cathalina for moral support outside the door. Presently, Isabel came out, flushed and relieved, to join Cathalina and walk with her up to her suite. "What did Miss Randolph do?"

"She was just as nice as could be, said she had heard some of us were frightened last night and wanted me to tell her all about it. So I did. And all she said to me was that I'd better not say anything about it to frighten all the girls and that there wasn't any such thing as a ghost, and that anyhow she is going to put on an extra night watchman, and have somebody go through the halls occasionally at night, 'Not to make you feel that there is any danger, but that you are being watched over,' she said. Isn't she *wonderful?*" Miss Randolph had gained another staunch supporter in Isabel.

"How do you suppose she found out? I'm going to ask every one who told her so early."

"Neither Hilary or I did, I'm sure." And when later in the day the six girls met, not one of them was found to have taken the news to Miss Randolph.

"Somebody must have overheard the girls talking and told her. Or perhaps some one else was

awake last night and knew it was Isabel." So concluded Cathalina and the rest agreed.

"But *who* was the 'woman in black'? because I really *saw* one!" declared Isabel. "I'm going to be a Sherlock Holmes from now on,—that is, if I have time!" she wisely added.

CHAPTER XIV.

OFF TO THE CITY.

As the "Fudge Club" opposition to Hilary as captain of the Junior Academy basketball team did not prove serious, she had been elected with very little campaigning on the part of her friends; for it was clear to all the girls that she was the best one for the office

"Hilary knows the game, has lots of go and good sense and never loses her head!" So Juliet summed up the necessary characteristics of a good captain. Practice went on vigorously after the election to prepare for the tournaments, which would not take place until February.

Thanksgiving came and went. Hilary went home to eat Thanksgiving dinner with her people and came back Saturday. As Philip Junior could not come home, Cathalina's father and mother, who could not wait any longer to see her, visited Greycliff. Although they knew that Cathalina was well and happy, they were not quite prepared to see the active little girl who greeted them, and their pleasure can

be imagined. "I've gained ten pounds, Mothery, and can hardly get into my clothes!" How proud she was of her beautiful, friendly mother and quiet, distinguished looking father! She brought her friends to meet them until Madame Sylvia said that she felt like a girl herself. A few of the teachers and girls who, like Hilary, lived comparatively near, had gone home or to house parties; but most of the Greycliff folk remained and were served to turkey and all the accompaniments of a fine Thanksgiving dinner.

Hilary was back in time to meet Cathalina's parents before they left, and to her surprise and delight was invited to spend the Christmas vacation in New York. "O, Cathalina," she cried afterward, "it must be a gl-orious dream! to visit in New York!"

"Maybe you'll be disappointed."

"O, no, I won't. I've never been to any real big city, like New York or Chicago; it takes money to travel."

"I suppose it does," assented Cathalina, who was learning several things this year. Many truths, too, which she had known only in theory were here displayed before her eyes; for example, what she had so often heard at home, that money can not supply brains or character, both of which are valuable in the class room.

So the busy days went by. Snow and ice shrouded the charms of Greycliff. The voice of the lake grew louder, but that of the little river was stilled, and after school hours, flying skaters in green, blue, red or orange sweaters, or in gay mackinaws glided up or down stream. The war was on in Europe, but the hearts of the young people in America were still light.

Then came a day when the last class was over, packing completed, and Cathalina and Hilary on their way to New York. They felt very old and important to be traveling "on their own hook", as Hilary expressed it. To be sure, for the first five or six hours, five or six other Greycliff girls kept them company. An art teacher, also, was their chaperone to the place where they changed to the through train. Then Philip was to meet them at the New York Central station and see them home. However, for most of the way they were taking care of themselves and held on to their purses and tickets for dear life.

"I never felt so stylish, Cathalina! Wasn't Aunt Hilary a dear to send me these lovely furs?"

"You are as sweet as can be, Hilary. That dark red coat is so becoming, with your pink cheeks. I'll have to rub mine."

Hilary gave Cathalina an admiring glance. "Why, you always look as if you came from 'Pahree'! And

you are the beauty with that grey-blue coat and those sweet furs. You must pose as the spirit of Greycliff in our tableaux. Is my hat on straight? I'll never get over my surprise when I opened Aunt Hilary's Christmas package."

"It was nice of them all to send your Christmas presents before you left."

"They knew I needed 'em,—blessed people!"

"Philip will enjoy a taste of June's cream candy. Nobody at our house can make anything like it."

"Give him all he can eat, then." But Hilary had her suspicions by this time that at the Van Buskirk home Cathalina and Philip could have the best of candy or anything else they wanted.

There was a furious snow storm outside. People who came in shook off snow and breezes of stinging air penetrated even to the comfortable coach in which the two girls were cosily settled. Cathalina had visions of stalled trains and delays such as she had known before. But she said nothing of her fears to Hilary and was relieved when, as they sped on, the snow stopped.

It was Hilary's first experience on a sleeper. At first she thought she never could go to sleep. But at last the novelty wore off and the monotonous noise of the car wheels lulled her to sleep. She knew no more till Cathalina wakened her. "Hurry up, Hilary, we must get dressed as quickly as pos-

sible. I overslept. O, you needn't *rush,* but don't waste any time. If you look out you see the beautiful old Hudson in its winter dress. We are coming down on the east side."

"We needed our little alarm clock, didn't we?" and Hilary chuckled at the thought of an alarm clock on a sleeper.

"But Cathalina, who often took Hilary's jokes seriously, replied, "We could have had the porter call us." Leadership was reversed now. Hilary, who guided Cathalina with kindness and efficiency through the mysteries of school life was glad to follow Cathalina's superior knowledge of what to do when traveling. They found that there was more time than they had supposed, for the train was late; and for some time after their berth was again converted into the ordinary Pullman seat they sat watching the wintry scenery. The obsequious attentions of the porter to Cathalina and, indeed, to herself, amused Hilary very much. She had rather opened her eyes at the tip she saw Cathalina give him the evening before. She, too, had learned something, not so valuable, perhaps, as some of Cathalina's lessons, about the extra attention which money can secure. The porter brushed them off, took their bags, and in a moment it seemed, they were out of the train and hurrying with the crowd.

"There's Phil!" said Cathalina joyously, though Hilary noticed at once how quiet was her voice and manner. "I guess they don't shout across the street at each other in New York," she thought with her usual humor.

"Is this Miss Lancaster?"

"My brother, Hilary," and Hilary looked up into the smiling face of Philip Van Buskirk Junior. The checks were passed over to the chauffeur, Hilary received a confused impression of the big station, and then found herself being helped into a comfortable, warm car and tucked in rugs by this same handsome host who kept up a good-humored flow of conversation with Cathalina. She was one question mark at first, according to Phil, who gave her an account of himself and the family as she inquired. Hilary was too much interested in the sights and sounds of the city to say an unnecessary word.

"The streets are in pretty good shape considering the snow we've had," Philip was saying.

"It isn't so cold today either," added Cathalina. "O, dear old New York! I'm so glad to be home again!"

"And how glad Mother and Father will be to have you, Cat, nobody but me—"

"O, please don't call me that, Phil! I did hope that none of the girls would ever hear that nickname!" Cathalina gave Hilary an imploring look.

Hilary responded nobly. "I'll never tell, or call you that myself," she declared.

"Kathleen, then," said Phil, laughing, "Is that better?"

"Yes; and if it *is* sentimental I like it best when you call me Kathleen Mavourneen."

"O, that's just because it makes me think of the song, you know," and Phil looked at Cathalina teasingly. But Cathalina slipped her arm through his and he patted her hand.

Hilary was quite impressed and wondered if either of her brothers could ever be as much like her father as Philip was like Mr. Van Buskirk. "It doesn't look much like it now," she thought, recalling the often grimy hands and boisterous speech of Gordon and Tom. Stealing a glance at Philip, she concluded that he did not look like a "sissy-boy" either, and that the little chaps would change when the time came. She felt as if she were in a dream as she was whirled along to stop before a fine mansion in a picturesque setting of snow-covered shrubbery and trees.

The two girls tripped up the steps, Philip following to ring the bell for them. "Sorry not to stop now," said he, "but Father has a matter for me to look after as soon as possible." Touching his hat,

Philip started back to the car as the smiling Watts opened the door and received the bags from the chauffeur.

"Deserted!" cried Cathalina, "but that's the way with boys." Then as they entered the warm, beautiful hall, there was Mrs. Van Buskirk hurrying to meet them.

"And here's my other girl!" she said, drawing Hilary also into motherly arms. "Cold?"

"No, but hungry," replied Cathalina. "We slept late and have quite an appetite, at least I have. Do we have to wait?"

"No, indeed," and Mrs. Van Buskirk led the way to the dining room.

"Hot chocolate, Mamma?" Cathalina suggested.

Hot chocolate there was with other good things duly served, while Mrs. Van Buskirk wondered and was thankful to see her little girl eat with the normal school girl's appetite.

Hilary felt almost lost as she slipped through the big rooms with Cathalina. Etta was unpacking when the girls reached Cathalina's room.

"Where are Hilary's things?"

"In the rose room, Miss Cathalina; I just finished in there."

"Mother's given you the room across from mine, Hilary,—will you be lonesome? If you are, you can come and sleep with me."

"O, no," Hilary answered. "I've always had to share my room with June or little Mary, so it will be lovely to have a room of my own—though, of course, I'd love to be with you."

Cathalina laughed. "I understand perfectly, Hilary. Come and see how you like it."

"O, what a dear of a room!" Hilary stopped just inside to feast her eyes.

"I like this room too, and came very near taking it after it was decorated; but blue is my color, after all, and I stick to my own room."

The rose room was not quite so large as Cathalina's. Its furniture and woodwork were of some very dark wood, Hilary did not know what. She had an impression of handsome furniture, pale pink to rose color upon white or gray tones, in walls and draperies. Pink and white silk curtains were at the windows. The dainty dressing table was fitted with silver.

"Now I'm going to leave you to yourself for a little while, Hilary,—we can clean up and I feel like another nap before lunch. There is paper and everything in the desk there if you want to write home. Do you want Etta to help you with your bath?"

"Mercy no!" said frank Hilary, "I wouldn't know what to do being waited on."

"All right. I see she has put everything out that you'll need. Better just get into bed for a little

while like me. I'll have her get the bath ready for you."

Cathalina rang for Etta, showing Hilary where the various conveniences of the room were, then thankfully went into her own room to wait for Etta to come to her. "O, how *good* it is to be home!"

Meanwhile Hilary walked around the exquisite room and peeped into its tiled bathroom. From the windows she looked out on snow-covered roofs and a far-stretching city. Next, she investigated the bureau and chiffonier drawers where Etta had neatly placed her clothing. In the closet her frocks hung in a row on silken hangers.

"I see why Cathalina used to catch herself up sometimes when she started to say things! Of course I knew that she must have a nice home, but I did not dream of this." She stood before a long mirror for a moment, seeing a pretty, wholesome, vigorous looking girl, with a frank, attractive face, clear, steady grey eyes and a pleasant mouth.

"I shall have to pinch myself to make sure I'm not dreaming all this elegance. I wonder what they are doing at home!" Hilary went back to the window where she sat looking out wistfully. "It will be my first Christmas away from home. I hope they'll miss me,—but there, this will never do!" She hopped up to avoid tears which would not be appropriate at all in a girl who was having as delight-

ful an opportunity as was hers on this visit, and going to the desk she began a letter home.

"Just think," she wrote, "here I am in New York, going to ride down Broadway—and Fifth Avenue—and Riverside Drive—and see the statue of Liberty holding up her little old torch, and go to the top of the Woolworth building, and who knows what else? I'll remember and tell you everything!" But just here Etta came in and no more was written till bath and a long nap had refreshed two tired little girls.

CHAPTER XV.

CHRISTMAS AT CATHALINA'S.

Two days passed before Christmas. In that time Hilary became somewhat familiar with her surroundings and even at home. For, in spite of the luxurious rooms and well-trained servants, the atmosphere of the Van Buskirk home was one of simple and cordial hospitality. If Hilary had been their own, the family could not have made her more welcome. Even Mr. Van Buskirk, as she wrote to her mother, considered her "worth talking to". Philip Junior teased her a little as he teased Cathalina, and yet in a quiet, brotherly way looked after them both, to help on the good time.

There was one delirious day of shopping in the wonderful stores. Hilary had never seen anything like the glittering Christmas display. Mrs. Van Buskirk took the girls from one bewildering shop to another. Shopping was not so tiresome when a fine limousine was waiting to carry you from place to place.

"I thought you'd like it!" and Cathalina's eyes sparkled. The winter cold had made her cheeks as rosy as Hilary's and she was enjoying it all doubly, for herself and for her guest.

"But I want so many things that I haven't bought anything! I want to take them each something, you know."

"O, well, there'll be something left even after Christmas, you know, and you can buy your presents then. Mamma bought most of my presents for me. She knew I wouldn't have any time."

"Let us just enjoy the sights and the Christmas cheer," said Mrs. Van Buskirk, who was not hurrying about, like many of the shoppers. "Our gifts are for the most part wrapped and labeled." But Hilary with great delight watched her purchase a few beautiful things.

They lunched at what Hilary described to June as a very grand place, where Hilary left the ordering to her more experienced hostesses. Then Hilary did make a few modest purchases, having by this time found out what she wanted, and went home, tired but delighted, to spend Christmas Eve.

The cousins had been in and out several times since Hilary came, but she declared that she never would get the names and relationships straight.

"Never mind, Hilary; they are all as nice and full of fun as can be and you will clear it all up when

you see us all together at the Christmas dinner. Really, there haven't been so many. Honestly, now, did you think that was a new lot that we met at lunch?"

"No, not all of them, but I had a hard time remembering which was which."

"And you a minister's daughter!"

"I've been too dazzled here, Cathalina. You must make allowances for a weak mind!"

"The trouble today was that they all had different clothes on."

"Yes, that was one thing. Then I met a Maria yesterday and an Ann Maria today and they were so alike—I liked her or both!"

"It's just one girl, our jolly old Ann Maria, and 'Cousin Elizabeth' and 'Cousin Libbie' are the same,—Mrs. Van Ness. She was the pretty lady in gray. And that perfect dear in the mink furs,—do you remember her? That was Aunt Mate or Aunt Mary,—Mrs. Hart. She is always making everybody feel comfortable in their minds. Then we have two Charlottes. You'll see."

"You don't blame me, do you, Philip?" and Hilary whirled around to where Phil sat reading by the library fire.

"Indeed I don't. Anybody that could get the Van Nesses and Van Buskirks and all the rest of 'em in two or three days would be a wonder."

"Good! Where's June's candy? Take it all, Philip!"

"Thanks, kind lady, what else can I do for you?"

"O, Phil, get your guitar and sing college songs for us,—do!" As Cathalina spoke she started for the instrument.

"Can't possibly tonight. We'll have a sing tomorrow night, all hands of us. Besides," here Philip coughed affectedly and finished on a high falsetto, "I have such a cold!"

Cathalina laughed. "All right till after dinner. You know Father and Mother always want some music on Christmas Eve."

At bedtime the two girls undressed before Hilary's fire. Cathalina thought that Hilary might be lonely on Christmas Eve, so she dismissed Etta and they chatted by themselves.

"Isn't Christmas the most beautiful time? Will you go to church tomorrow?"

"Yes; Father and Mother always go. O, I want you to hear a wonderful Christmas service, chimes and everything!"

"How cold and still it is tonight!"

"If you can call a city still. Of course it really is not noisy out here, and anyway when you get used to a city you don't hear things any more than the ticking of our little alarm clock."

"You only need to mention alarm clock to prove it. Do you remember how I can sleep through all the din?" Both girls laughed at the memories of certain early morning hours. "But you don't know how queer I feel sometimes, Cathalina, as if this is a story and nothing is real."

"It seems real enough to me. Haven't I the dearest father and mother and brother?"

"Having some of my own I could not say 'dearest', but they are just wonderful. And why didn't you tell me, Cathalina, that you lived like this?"

"Well, Hilary, of course, I'm used to my dear home and would not have thought much about it if Mother and Father had not warned me. They said if I wanted to be happy and have the girls feel free with me and maybe love me a little, I must do as the rest do and not ever hint about having a maid or anything. Then they said, as usual, that it is what you are and not what you have that counts and they were anxious to see if I could get along without being waited on and amount to something myself."

At Hilary's wondering look she continued: "Of course they were too kind to put it just that way, but I really thought that they must be disgusted with me,—and how I cried, all to myself! But I made up my mind to it and thought at first that I'd show everybody I could stay and work hard at my les-

sons! Then I liked Greycliff and the girls so well that I forgot all about the beginning or why I went there. I've just been understanding since I came back home how worried they must have been about me."

"I suppose you felt almost as queer at Greycliff as I do here. Still, it's a big place there and they have servants too. I don't know how this immense house would have looked to me if I had not been to Greycliff first."

Cathalina laughed. "But this is a *home*. It *is* a big old thing, but I love it. You ought to see some of the other places here. Ours would not seem so much for size, then. But come on, Hilary-Dillary, we're going to hang up our stockings just like kiddies tonight,—in the den next to my room. Phil promises to do it too, just for fun, as we used to. Did you see Mother buying that horn and jumping-jack?"

"Yes; I thought it was for some little chap in the family."

"It was for her little kiddie-boy."

* * * * *

Christmas morning was shining with the combined radiance of sun and snow.

"Merry Christmas, Phil!" Cathalina in negligee and slippers pounded on Phil's door. Heavy breathing, somewhat exaggerated, greeted her.

"Merry Christmas, Hilary! O, I caught you! You couldn't hear that old scamp at the end of the hall. I know he was awake, but you'll see, he'll come pounding on our door when he hears us talking in here,—and pretend that he never heard me at all." Cathalina shook off her slippers and with the bulging stockings she settled herself by Hilary. "I left Phil's by his door. He won't care much, but he may pretend he does to please me."

Etta appeared to light the gas in the grate. She laughed in response to their calls of "Merry Christmas". Going to a drawer in the chiffonier, she drew out two fleecy wraps which she put around the excited girls.

"Now you take out one, Hilary, and then I'll take one. I feel just like little 'Catty Buskirk' aged five. It's just as well that we're starting early, because you and I, and Phil, if we can get him to help, are to decorate the Christmas tree. Loads of things came in yesterday and I imagine more will come this morning."

"For all 'your sisters and your cousins and your aunts'?" asked Hilary, as she felt again of the knobs in the stocking and drew out first a rectangular package. "My, look at the yellow satin bow!" she cried, as she unwrapped a candy box accompanied by Philip's card and the familiar inscription "Sweets to the sweet."

"Phil brought home a great box of sweets that you will get later," said Cathalina, accepting a bonbon and starting to unwrap a similar package. This is just like yours. Mother was pretending to whisk something out of sight that he gave her."

"That is the fun about Christmas. Everything is so jolly and mysterious. But you have such loads of things all the time that I shouldn't think it would be so much fun."

"Yes it is. Really, Hilary, we can't have everything as you think, especially sweets and jewelry and little gems of things in pictures and books and —O, plenty of things. And all the Van Buskirks and Van Nesses and the rest just love the Christmas fun. The 'mysteriouser' everything is the better."

All the simple things that ought to be in any well-regulated stocking were in theirs. There was even a stick of old-fashioned peppermint candy, wrapped in a slender package as if very precious and marked by Mr. Van Buskirk, while Mrs. Van Buskirk had contributed a china doll for each. It was tiny and dressed in a crochet frock after a fashion of years ago.

"They carried out the idea of kiddies with us, too, didn't they? Isn't it fun to slip your hand down and feel the little packages?"

Hilary found two gold hat pins from Mrs. Van Buskirk and a bottle of the very best violet perfume

from Mr. Van Buskirk. Then, down in the toe was a small package with a card marked, "Merry Christmas to Hilary from her loving roommate, Cathalina."

Cathalina's color rose as she said, "I do hope you'll like it!"

Hilary lifted the little hinged cover.

"O, Cathalina! It matches the pendant! How did you know that I love rings better than anything else? But, honey, you give me these lovely things, and what shall I do?"

"I'll show you." Cathalina took the flashing little ring from between the satin pads and slipped it on Hilary's finger. "'With this ring I thee'—present! Good, it fits. Do you remember when I was trying my sapphire ring on your finger down by the lake one day?"

"Was *that* it!" exclaimed Hilary, turning her well-shaped hand to see the opal flash green and red in the light from the fire. Like the pendant, the ring had its tiny diamonds, too. "How beautiful it is!"

"Look inside," suggested Cathalina.

Hilary drew off the narrow circlet and read the fine letters, "C. to H. Greycliff."

Cathalina's stocking was almost a duplicate of Hilary's, but in the toe she found a dainty wrist watch. She already had an exquisite little watch,

but this was in a style for which she had expressed a desire.

"Rah-rah for Greycliff!" cried Cathalina rather irrelevantly, waving the empty stocking, and slid out of bed. Etta came promptly at her ring and assisted both girls. It was Hilary's first experience at having a maid do her hair. She sat still with sparkling eyes, thinking of the vivid description which she could give June and the boys of little Hilary in the lap of luxury.

"Toot-toot!" and "tat-tat" on their door. "Merry Christmas, ladies!"

"Merry Christmas, you old fraud!" responded Cathalina. "I called 'Merry Christmas' hours ago and you heard me too, didn't you now, Philly?"

"Couldn't I have been asleep?"

"Yes, you *could,* but you weren't."

"So long," said Philip; "I smell turkey. Toot-toot."

"They *did* give him that horn! Isn't it awful? We'll hang that and my 'dollie' on the tree."

"Is everybody coming to dinner?"

"Yes; the whole 'gens', root and branch!"

"Don't quote Latin; it makes me think of Dr. Carver. Poor thing, I hope she has a nice Christmas!"

"Why 'poor thing'? She looks down on us! And

besides, since the 'Herr Professor' came, she lives in hopes, as Ann Maria says."

"My! Do lady Ph.D's ever get married?"

"How should I know?" returned Cathalina saucily. "Ready, Hilary? Come on, then to hot waffles and real maple syrup!"

With arms around each other, they started in step down the stairway and began to sing a Christmas carol. Philip, appearing in the drawing room door, joined in with a clear baritone. Then Mr. and Mrs. Van Buskirk came from the library to join the young people and they all went singing to the dining room.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN THE CLAN GATHERED.

"I SUPPOSE that Christmas Eve is really the time for Christmas trees," said Cathalina, as she straightened a candle on the tree and hung another silver ball where it would show to the best advantage. "But everybody wants to be in his own home then, and anyway Cousin John couldn't get in until late last night and Uncle Mart was to get in this noon. He's been South on business."

The family dinner was to be early on account of the smaller fry. At five o'clock darkness had fallen, the Van Buskirk home was aglow from every window and the family waiting. The tree was in what Hilary called the back parlor, separated from the room at the front by pillars and draperies. As Cathalina flitted about the tree looking like a sweet Christmas fairy, Hilary sat almost lost in a great chair, enjoying the beauty of the tree and of the warm, spacious room with its fine pictures and tasteful appointments.

"There!" cried Cathalina at last, and pressing the electric button left the room dark, except for such light as came in from other well lighted rooms. "They'll all come at once," continued Cathalina, perching on the arm of Hilary's chair.

"How can the children wait all day for their presents?"

"O, they have most of them at home, but they do look forward to the big family tree. I used to be crazy about the time when I would see Santa Claus. O, isn't it fine, Hilary, to have you here and everybody coming! Katy never gave me a look when I peeped into the kitchen a while ago. She was bossing the whole crew,—wouldn't hear to the caterer Mother had suggested to the housekeeper. And we're lucky to have her and her good homey cooking. Some of Mother's friends have such times. Mrs. Utley has millions of money, but when her littlest kiddie had been out with his nurse and exposed to small pox, the whole set left and she had to get along by herself a while. If you knew her you would understand how funny it was. I have forgotten how long they were quarantined, but nobody was sick.—O, there they come!" Cathalina rose and spun around on her slippered toes, her light dress floating around her. Hilary rose, too, in some inward excitement, and shook out the lines of her prettiest "party frock", which was quite as nice as

Cathalina's; for Mrs. Van Buskirk had not changed her ideas in regard to simplicity for young girls.

Watts in his most elegant style was admitting the guests whose merry voices drew the girls to the hall. Young laughter, little Charlotte's shrill treble, Uncle Knickerbocker's kind bass tones, the cheery greetings and "Merry Christmases" of old and young soon filled the house with cheer. Several of the children could not resist the shining bannisters and slid down triumphantly before their elders could stop them. The company rapidly increased in a truly informal gathering where common interests and affection made everything natural and spontaneous.

Hilary watched it all with fascinated eyes in the the intervals of being presented, though she little dreamed how closely her life was to be connected with this family group. Having met many people in her few years, she noted the correct speech, intelligent faces and general air of content and ease. Philip Van Buskirk was the only man of large wealth among them, but most of the family connection were in comfortable circumstances, accustomed to the atmosphere of education and culture. With Aunt Knickerbocker, Hilary quite fell in love. That lady, as usual, wore soft black silk with white lace. A faint odor of violets always clung to any possession of Katherine Knickerbocker's,—her

gloves, or scarf, and tonight she wore the flowers themselves. She held Hilary's hand, looking at her with kind, shrewd eyes and a pleasant smile. Her chin was lifted, her head tipped a little sidewise, as she welcomed Hilary. Then with a low laugh and a quick little movement she gathered Hilary close to her side, and keeping an arm around her, drew her along to meet some of the rest.

"Charlotte, this is the fine girl that rooms with Cathalina at Greycliff. Miss Randolph has written many complimentary things about her. Hilary, this is Mrs. Stuart, Cathalina's aunt. Come here, Sara Stuart, I want you to meet Cathalina's friend. Introduce her, please, to Emily and Campbell."

Thus Hilary was passed around or waited till the young people were brought to her. From the oldest, who was Uncle Knickerbocker with snow-white hair, to wee "Sh'lotte *Mee*-nia", they all took Hilary into their hearts and made her one of them. She was greatly interested, of course, in John Van Ness and his sweetheart, Juliet King. This was Juliet's first visit with the family since the engagement was announced.

"Isn't she lovely?" whispered Cathalina, "not exactly pretty, either, but so—charming. Look at John; he can't keep his eyes away from her."

When dinner was announced, Philip Van Buskirk escorted Aunt Katherine, while Uncle Knicker-

bocker, gallantly and with much joking, tucked Sylvia's hand in his arm. Among the youngsters, Philip Junior took out Hilary, which made her feel very grand and grown up.

The dining room was ablaze with light, reflected in the glittering cut glass and shining silver. Two long tables were decked in Christmas trimmings. Here, as in the other rooms, poinsettias, holly and mistletoe were in evidence and lovely cut flowers gave fragrance. Watts was in his element and the pretty maids wore sprigs of holly in their caps.

There was a slight disturbance when little Charlotte found that she had been expected to sit by her mother instead of with the younger generation at their table. But at Sylvia's nod, Watts whisked the high-chair to the other table, next to Charlotte's sister.

With bowed heads they listened to Uncle Knickerbocker's long grace. Louise was somewhat inattentive because of various wigglings on the part of her small charge; and Will was guilty of a suppressed giggle as out of one eye he watched Charlotte's attempts to speak and Louise with her finger on the child's lips. Her shrill voice piped out as soon as the blessing was asked: "But I don't *see* any turkey!" A general ripple of amusement went round; then the hum of conversation began.

Philip sat at one end of the children's table, Cathalina at the other. "The whole tribe is here, isn't it?" asked Campbell Stuart, a tall, good-looking young fellow who sat between Hilary and Ann Maria. "Can you get the hang of our relatives yet, Miss Hilary?"

"Not yet."

"It's really very simple, as our Trig professor says," Campbell continued. "Now that they are together at table it would be a good time to get a fine general idea of the various groups. (I quote again, from our distinguished history professor!) Let us start in on the other table." Campbell straightened his shoulders and made an appropriate gesture.

"That's old Peppy Brown to perfection," said Phil, "but nixy on the family history, please."

"It will only take a minute, Phil, brace up. Of course you know Aunt and Uncle Knickerbocker. Then that gentleman with the very black hair, on the other side of Aunt Sylvia, is Martin Van Buskirk. He is a good scout and you'll like him. He's named for the Martin Van Buskirk who came over from Holland, fought in the Revolutionary war and married Maria Van Ness. Uncle Mart says he does not know which took the most courage,—with no reflection on his bride intended. Uncle Mart's a bachelor himself.

"Next to him is my mother, and right opposite is Father with Aunt Adaline Wallace, another of Uncle Phil's five sisters."

Hilary gasped and laughed.

"Now we'll pick them out," Campbell went on. In schoolboy style he entertained Hilary for some minutes with his lively description of uncles, aunts and cousins on both sides of the house.

"Do they all live in New York?" inquired Hilary.

"No, but near, except Aunt Lois. She's teaching in Virginia. We live in Brooklyn this winter, but are going out to stay at Cousin Lib's tonight after the fun. You know Father is related to her too, so we're all double cousins."

"Mercy, Campbell!" exclaimed Louise Van Ness. "You are getting Hilary more mixed than ever. Forget it, Hilary. Do tell us, Campbell, or Philip, how it happened that your famous old team lost that last game!"

No more effectual means could have been devised for changing the subject. Both boys eagerly began to explain how it happened, by a series of unlooked for accidents, together with the unfairness of the referee that the football team had been defeated!

"It couldn't have been, of course," whispered Sara

to Ann Maria, "that the other team played a better game! Aren't boys funny!"

Will and Nan were keeping the fun going at the other end of the table and were ably assisted by Charles and Henry Wallace, two polite but irrepressible lads who had been promised all the turkey they could eat if they would behave like gentlemen at Uncle Philip's. Any resentment at reproof which they may have felt they were taking out in an excess of polite behaviour, especially to each other, with droll remarks which kept Cathalina convulsed with laughter most of the time.

After the dinner came the tree. Hilary had helped decorate, but did not realize how like fairyland the place would look, with the candles lit and the little electric bulbs shining among the branches. No other lights were on in the room, that the big tree might stand out in all its glory. Some of the branches were frosted with a sparkling dust, and hung by invisible wires from above, a Christmas angel spread white wings. For a moment, every one was silent. Even little Charlotte drew a sigh of rapture. "Peace on earth," murmured Aunt Katherine.

Then Charlotte ran up to the tree. "I see my dollie!" she cried, lifting baby hands and arms to the big doll which she knew must be hers.

"And here's old Santa Claus!" said Ann Maria, calling Charlotte's attention to young Philip, much padded, with long white beard and great fur overcoat. Exclamations of delight greeted the gifts, always especially nice at Aunt Sylvia's; for she took the opportunity to remember generously a few of the young people not quite so abundantly provided for as Philip, and Cathalina, and, indeed, tried in every way to find out the real heart's desire of each.

Hilary found herself with an armful of presents, several books for which she had been longing, a dainty scarf which was one of the pretty things picked up on Sylvia's last trip abroad, a flashlight, a traveling case, a dozen fine handkerchief's, some stationery and candy. She turned to Mr. Van Buskirk and said earnestly, "O, how can I accept all these lovely presents when I've given next to nothing to you!"

Philip Senior placed his hands lightly over her shoulders: "Hilary, child, you have done more already for my little girl in lessons of self-reliance and devotion to work than these baubles and trifles could ever do for you." And Hilary was comforted.

"Clear the floor for the Virginia reel!" called Philip. Methodist Hilary looked up startled. "Don't worry, Hilary," said the amused Cathalina, who was standing near. "It is not a real dance—

that is, no more than the gym dances. This is a family custom,—once a year, and Sir Roger De Coverly, well, they prance around like this," and Cathalina held one hand high as if reaching toward an imaginary partner, and minced about in a rhythmic walk.

Uncle Knickerbocker was approaching Madame Sylvia with what Hilary called "gym steps and variations". Aunt Knickerbocker with a sweeping courtesy was greeting Uncle Martin, who reached her just before Philip Senior. "Never mind, Philip; it's fine to be popular,—and Martin is always such fun,—no offense, Philip?"

"None whatever, Madam," replied her host, his hand on his heart, "though I envy Martin!"

"'Twas ever thus," sighed Martin Van Buskirk, "valued not so much for my handsome face as for my ready tongue!"

"Your ready heels, my lad!" returned Aunt Katherine, as he led her out.

"Look at 'em!" said Cathalina, poking Hilary. "You'd think Father was a boy tonight."

Hilary shook with laughter at the jokes and the exaggerated old-time manners assumed for the occasion as the elders took their places. The younger children preferred to play with their toys, but the rest lined up in the double line. Cathalina played for

them this time,—an old-fashioned tune that set Hilary's feet to tapping. Campbell, tall, handsome lad, came up and asked her to be his partner. Hilary imitated the low curtseys of the rest to match his bow, saying, "I wish I could, Campbell, but I'd be sure to get mixed up and spoil it all. Isn't it pretty?"

Campbell drew up an easy chair by Hilary's and stretched out lazily. "I'm quite contented to sit here by you. I guess Uncle Knickerbocker couldn't have eaten the turkey I did. Look at the fancy steps he is putting in. I bet he'll be lame tomorrow!"

"He's such a fine old gentleman," said Hilary, warmly, "handsome yet."

"O, he was some beau in his time," replied Campbell, who enjoyed watching Hilary's expressive face more than the maneuvers upon the floor.

One turn of the old-fashioned dance was enough for the elders, who scattered, laughing and breathless, to drop into convenient chairs and watch the graceful figures of John and Juliet, Louise, Ann Maria and the rest until they too were tired and gathered around the piano for more quiet enjoyment. The singing of fresh young voices, the gay or tender songs, as one or another called for some favorite, and last the trying of some new records, brought the family party to a contented and happy close. Nurses and maids were off duty, and when

it was discovered that Charlotte was asleep on the floor with her precious doll, the last of several which she had received that day, it was thought high time for departure. Several out-of-town people remained over night with the Van Buskirks; others went with Mr. and Mrs. Van Ness, and the rest pursued their different ways home.

CHAPTER XVII.

BASKETBALL.

To BOTH Cathalina and Hilary the days in New York, with the circle of lively young friends flew fast. After more than a week of unadulterated good times, Hilary found herself homeward bound in charge of Mr. Martin Van Buskirk, who was off on another business trip for his firm. They followed a brief visit with the dear home people who were unselfishly glad for all the good times which were coming Hilary's way. Little Mary sat solemnly listening, holding the big "New York dollie" which Mrs. Van Buskirk had sent her, and enjoying all the stories about the little Charlotte, some of whose escapades Hilary omitted to tell lest her small sister be influenced to like performances. Gordon and Tom were as interested in the New York boys, and June could not hear enough about the beautiful

home, the Christmas tree and the places which her sister had seen, in and about New York.

Cathalina and her family had the intimate little visit together which would carry them over the hours of separation ahead. Aunt Katherine was delighted at the result of Cathalina's adventure into a girls' school and wanted to hear first hand from Cathalina all about Miss Randolph, the school and the girls.

But in no time at all, it seemed, school days at Greycliff had begun and both Cathalina and Hilary were hard at work, Hilary whipping her team into shape for the tournaments. All the Junior girls were interested and loyal. The team was a strong one and had high hopes.

On a frosty night in February, the big "gym", lit up with brilliant electric lights and gay with banners, afforded to Greycliff girls and their visitors a fascinating scene. Girls, girls, girls, and girls again, came laughing, talking excitedly, each expectant of glory for her own class team. The older girls were there, too, to see which team would win the privilege of playing against their winning team and to note how they played.

Each class had its alotted seats, its song and "yell" leaders, as in the colleges, each applauding the others' efforts, but trying to outstrip every other in originality or noise. No one sat still, but all were bobbing up or down, this way or that.

Now the Seniors led off, "Seniors 'rah, Seniors 'rah! Greycliff!" The Sophomores broke into a jolly song and were followed by the Freshmen, who brought down the house by their shrill singing and desperate efforts.

O, we're the little Freshmen,
So young and fresh and gay;
And when we all
Play basketball,
We bear the prize away!

We've never been defeated;
We've brains and skill and 'pep';
Just let us play
By night or day,
And watch us make the 'rep'!

Avalon, in green sweater and cap, led the singing, completely transformed from the homesick girl Cathalina first knew. Isabel, with characteristic energy, led the fierce yell, "Br-rr-rr-ah-zoom! zoom! Freshmen!" Isabel looked funny enough, stooping to the ground as she had seen her brothers do, carrying the "Br-rr" along as in her two hands and waving her arms wildly on "Freshmen!"

Cathalina joined in the literally violent applause given the Freshmen and bid fair to become as crazy as the rest. She had written a song for the Juniors and was anxious to hear how it would sound.

Like the rest, the Junior song leader was excited and marshalled her forces with much enthusiasm. "Now put some 'pep' into it, girls," she cried, ready, —sing!"

Greycliff Juniors bold are we,
Strong and hearty as you see;
Baskets?—we can make them all,
When our team plays basketball!
Run and go,
Catch each throw,
'Rah-rah, Juniors! Greycliff Hall!

Don't you wish you had our team?
Watch them when they get up steam!
Juliet's swift and can not fall;
You can never budge old Paul!
Yells and din,
Juniors win!
Junior 'Cademy! Greycliff Hall!

"Imagine the elegant Cathalina making up a song like that when she first came to Greycliff!" Isabel had said, and Cathalina did not more than half like it, though Isabel's intentions were entirely complimentary, as Cathalina knew.

One small section of seats held the lady teachers. The "Gym" teacher was walking here and there, talking occasionally to the referee. The latter was a fine looking girl, lithe and tall, with blonde hair

braided and wrapped tightly around her head. Blouse, bloomers and stockings were of black silk and she was the embodiment of grace and swiftness as she blew her whistle and ran hither and yon after the game commenced.

By lot it was determined that the Juniors were to play the Sophomores and the Freshmen the Seniors, an arrangement which was hard on the Freshmen because their defeat was so immediate and crushing. It was humiliating, also, in point of score. The contest between the Sophomores and Juniors was more even, and accordingly more interesting; but the Juniors won, and at the last ran up quite a score.

Then came the most exciting contest of all, between the two winning teams, Junior and Senior Academy. Teams and classes were quivering with expectation. The Junior team expected victory, but knew that it must be hard won if won at all. "It helps a lot, girls," said Hilary, "to think you can beat 'em if you try hard enough. I just feel in my bones that we *can*,—now *shall* we do it?" The Seniors were alive to the disgrace of being beaten by a younger class, and knowing that the Junior team was a strong one, they prepared for a struggle.

The referee blew her whistle. She tossed the ball and the two centers jumped eagerly. At once it became the property of the Senior girls, whose

guarding was fine and determination desperate. Not a chance did the Juniors have until the Seniors had made two baskets amid shrieks of delight from Senior "rooters" and the encouraging yells of Juniors to their team. Then the tide turned for a time. A Senior girl fumbled and the ball was Hilary's, who played left forward. A quick and accurate toss put it through the basket, while Juniors this time shrieked and applauded. In the next play Juliet caught the ball and tossed it over her head,—to come down through the basket! Four baskets the Juniors made in the midst of wild applause or breathless moments of anxiety. A close struggle followed, each side striving to gain the advantage.

In unwise partisanship, a Senior girl was guilty of a foul, and Hilary was called out to try for the basket. Silence reigned while Captain Hilary stood facing the basket with the ball between her hands. She measured the distance and with an easy lift tossed the ball straight above the basket, through which it dropped to the floor. Senior successes followed, and at the end of the first half the score was even.

"Clean basketball, remember, girls," said Hilary earnestly to her team, as they stretched flat on the floor to rest between halves. "Don't lose your heads and we'll beat 'em yet. Team work is the thing. Ethel's lost her head already and is mad. Look out

for some mean tricks. But they won't do any good. We've got a keen referee, all rightee, and she sees everything. Did you see how she caught up Ethel that time? My, she was sharp! I'd hate to be spoken to like that!"

The last half was close and fast. The Juniors took their Captain's advice and played eagerly, but with judgment. Juliet and Pauline seemed inspired. Pauline, guarding the Senior captain, jumped up before her and catching the ball before the surprised Senior realized what had happened, sent it flying to Hilary, who once more tossed it in the Junior basket. Two or three of the Seniors lost their temper. Several fouls worked to the advantage of the Juniors again. The score rose in favor of the Juniors and the game ended with a score of 12 to 8 in their favor.

The victory was hard won but highly satisfactory,—to the Juniors! Hilary, flushed and tired, but happy, received congratulations. The Juniors with songs and cheers gathered around the team which had won them glory. Cathalina radiated joy as much for Hilary's sake as for the honor of her class. "You certainly can play basketball, Hilary," said Isabel, slapping Hilary on the shoulder as a boy might have done. "Now do you level best and maybe we can beat the Senior Collegiates!"

Hilary shook her head doubtfully, but answered

with a bright smile, "We'll play so the Prep classes won't be ashamed of us anyway!"

But alas for the hopes of prepdom! No team had ever beaten this Senior Collegiate team on its way through Greycliff, and history was repeated when the last games took place a week later. To the joy of the Academy classes, however, the games between "Junior A" and "Senior C" was a close one. Both teams were in fine training and exhibited a spirit of fair play; but the upper class bore off the honors.

"I surely would have been mortified if those Preps had beaten us, and, honestly, once I was almost afraid of it!" Thus spoke the exhausted but victorous captain, who lay stretched on the floor to recover after the game. One girl was being rubbed with camphor, another was applying arnica to a big bump and a third was having a sprain investigated, while Miss Randolph, with contracted brow, came over to join the gymnasium teacher and see what were the injuries of her athletes.

To a few of her teachers Miss Randolph relieved her feelings as they all walked back to Greycliff Hall, picking their way carefully over the ice and snow that had formed or fallen too rapidly for removal from the walks.

"I do not and never shall approve of these competitive games before the whole school! Practice

games are well enough, but the girls get so excited that they will 'do or die', as one of their ridiculous songs says!" Miss Randolph's laugh almost belied the severity of her remarks.

"'Vitamque volunt pro laude pacisci'," quoted the classic Dr. Carver, whose blood seldom warmed over athletics of any sort.

"That is their spirit," assented Miss Randolph. "I'm always afraid of some calamity, but so far we have escaped. I feel responsible for the girls. However, none of them are allowed to go into anything without the consent of their parents."

"Not much can happen in basketball, can there?"

"No, but I am always afraid of the bruises and strains and sometimes they fall so hard and strike their heads. Perhaps the athletic craze is more wholesome than some others, but we endure and are thankful when every tournament is past. And, indeed it seems to me, if school or college life is to foster any refinement of speech or manner in our girls, something will have to be done about these performances."

As it happened, fate was kind to Miss Randolph and her old-school ideas. To the great disappointment of both schools, the Highlanders had an epidemic of measles, "measly things", as Isabel said, and arrangements for the competitive games were completely broken off. But to relieve the general

feeling of disappointment they were promised some kind of an affair together, when all danger of infection was past. It might be a picnic, a masquerade, nobody knew just what. "And *next* year, girls," said Eloise, impressively, "we can go with the Collegiates over to see the athletic carnival at the military school?"

"How do you know, Elo'?" asked Cathalina.

"The Academy Seniors are supposed to have enough sense to accompany the distinguished Collegiates! They have a *wonderful* time, they say,—met by the boys in their uniforms, of course, escorted around to all the doings and if you know anybody there you can even *see* him! There are plenty of teachers along, of course."

"My, I wish Phil were that near!" exclaimed Cathalina, with a homesick pang. "It it a real grown-up school? He isn't going back to the same school, perhaps, next year, is just trying a new school this year, but he will be in college work, I guess."

"Don't you *know?*" asked Hilary is some surprise.

"Poor Hilary. Haven't you learned yet, Hilary, that I'm just beginning to pay attention to school things?"

"Sure enough. But they're interesting, aren't they?"

"Fairly so," replied Cathalina with a twinkle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BIRD CLUBS AND A PRINCESS.

"WHEN may I see you alone, Miss Randolph?" Cathalina had slipped through the front ranks of the girls in the hall after dinner, and leaning close spoke in low tones.

"Right now, Cathalina," Miss Randolph drew Cathalina's hand within her arm and completed the short distance to her door. "Anything serious?"

"No, Miss Randolph, but I have a puzzle and I thought you might help me."

Miss Randolph closed her door and went straight to a low couch where she lay down and motioned Cathalina to a chair near. "Excuse me, but my head troubles me a little today and I want to rest."

Cathalina pushed the chair aside and drew up a small stool on which she dropped, taking the hand that Miss Randolph stretched out.

"Let me rub your forehead as I do Mamma's sometimes."

Miss Randolph closed her eyes a few minutes as she was soothed by Cathalina's ministrations. Then she caught Cathalina's hand and put it with the other in her own firm, white hand. "Now tell me," she said.

Cathalina very sincerely loved and admired Miss

Randolph and to be here so intimately talking with the lady of whom some of the girls were in such terror was rather embarrassing when her first feeling of "poor lady with a headache" had gone. "It is a rest to have you here, Cathalina," Miss Randolph continued, looking so sweet and womanly and kind, as she waited for Cathalina's confidences that the young girl felt an affection even warmer than she had felt before.

"It is not anything, then, that will add to my gray hairs?" Miss Randolph gave Cathalina a comical look as if to indicate that she was accustomed to such things.

"No, indeed, Miss Randolph, and perhaps you will think I am silly. It's only this. I heard Betty and Isabel and Diane talking about joining the bird clubs, and Diane and Isabel both said that they'd love to, only it would be all their people could do this year to meet the regular expenses, and they did not dare ask for field glasses or even opera glasses or any more books. Now I'm going to join, and I thought maybe I could get the textbooks and some others and make a little library for the East Corridor girls. But I'm afraid to buy glasses for the girls,—they're so proud and independent. Why I had a time to get Hilary to accept a few little presents."

"Independence of a certain kind is a fine virtue, Cathalina. Has Hilary glasses?"

"Yes, her aunt sent her some fine ones."

"Let me think a little. I suppose you would like to buy each of the other girls a forty or fifty dollar pair?"

Cathalina laughed at Miss Randolph's tone. "Yes, of course I would, but I see that I can't unless I do it 'unbeknownst', as our Katy says, and anyway they would suspect."

"How would this plan do? For some time I have thought that we ought to have a supply of glasses to rent; but some of the girls are so careless that that fact, together with our lack of funds, has prevented our getting them. Now how would you like to present the school with a number of field glasses of moderate price, and perhaps two or three more expensive ones to be given out at my discretion or given by the science teachers for special interest or ability? Possibly one or two could be awarded at the close of the year as prizes."

"That is the very thing! I'll write Papa today! Thank you, Miss Randolph, I might have known that you would take the worry away. And you can manage it, can't you, so that Diane and Isabel get some good ones?"

"I surely will if the little princess gives us so much. She ought to have some reward!"

"'Princess!'" thought Cathalina, as she went away. "That's what I'm going to be, forever and

ever!—a fairy princess who will make all sorts of lovely dreams come true for people!"

"Hilary was taken into the secret, and such fun as the girls had for several weeks, looking at Catalogues and ordering, with the help of the teacher who had charge of the bird classes, books, glasses and magazines. For the idea of an East Corridor bird library had expanded into an extensive addition to the general library of the school and promised to interest not only Mr. Van Buskirk, but his friends, and outside of the scientific line in which Cathaline had begun. Mr. Van Buskirk had sent a check for a thousand dollars, five hundred of which could be spent by Cathalina, under some direction or oversight. "Let her do it," he wrote, "if you think she can, even if she makes some mistakes. She will have to learn, and I like to see her take the initiative in some plan for others." To Cathalina he wrote: "Keep your eyes open. I am prepared to make quite a contribution to the Greycliff library when we understand its needs."

If Greycliff had been beautiful in autumn, it was doubly so now, as the leaves came out and blossoms decked the outlying meadows. In the wood, the girls found blue, white and yellow violets. From her window Cathalina could see the birds flitting about the branches near by and hear the new and lovely spring songs that came from their happy

throats. "Why," she exclaimed to Hilary one day after a long tramp when they had dropped on the beach to rest with a group of girls. "I always loved to look at the trees and sky and water, but it does make it so much more fascinating if you go after something."

"Yes," assented Hilary. "Now, when I see a bird on the shore I wonder if it is a duck or a coot or a gull,"—"Or a chicken!" finished Isabel, who continued with a tale of her own. "The other day I identified the janitor's old hen as a grouse! O, yes, *I* can identify *any* old thing! I put down every line and mark I could see,—in my note book, and never knew any better till it came beating it toward me and clucking! And I watched ten minutes for one of his old barnyard ducks to come around the corner of a rock. What business it had down on the shore posing as a gull or something I could not see."

"I did worse than that," said Hilary. "Honestly, girls, I hardly knew a bluejay from a wren until this spring. So the first week of class I was trying to get as big a list as possible,"—here several girls looked interested and nodded their heads as if to say in girls' parlance, "me, too!"

"And I saw a bird that seemed to be building a nest around by the engine house somewhere. He was an awfully pretty looking little chap, all brown and stripey like the sparrow, and his feathers were

so new and bright that I just knew he must be a new arrival, some kind of a finch, by his thick bill. I noted down very carefully all his streaks and bars, just as Isabel did. The only very striking thing about him was a dark patch on his throat, and I found in my book the description of a 'black-throated bunting'. That was it, of course," and Hilary brought her fist down on the heap of sand which she had been scraping up as she talked. "For at least half an hour I was watching, and the longer I looked the less the black-throated bunting idea would do! And what do you suppose he was?"

"An English sparrow," cried Diane, who had been grinning all through the description. "I did almost the same thing,—the beasts!"

"Yes, I was so mad," smiled Hilary, "and mortified! But that lively little fellow was so cute and handsome that I've had more patience with English sparrows since, for all my disgust that time. I was only too thankful that I had not handed in my report before I found out what he was!"

As the days went by, the blossoms fell from the pink and white dreams that went by the names of plum, peach, apple or pear trees. The leaves changed from the green mists that shrouded the trees in early May to the waving foliage which hid the nest-building birds. The boat-house was opened, the life-saving watchmen out for the season.

Canoeing and rowing began on river and lake, and picnics or beach parties were common. As Cathalina and Hilary had learned to row the summer before, many a jolly pull they had, together or with other girls, particularly Betty Barnes and Lilian North. Lilian had come to be as "chummy" with Hilary as Betty was with Cathalina, though neither friendship interfered in the least with the strong affection between Cathalina and Hilary.

"Hil and Lil," chanted Cathalina one afternoon when the four were bobbing on the gentle waves.

"That rhyme may come in handy for your next class song," suggested Betty.

"I write no more by sea or shore," sang Cathalina, losing her stroke and dashing them all with spray.

"Say it not," protested Lilian. "How about themes?"

"What is the use of being so practical, Lil?" rejoined Cathalina. "Father says that poets don't have to be consistent!"

Betty was leaning over, trailing her hand in the water. "I think I saw a shark then, or maybe a whale," she said dreamily.

"Goosey, they don't have 'em here," chided Lilian.

Betty looked at her solemnly. "Don't they? Thank you. Anyway I heard Mickey—Boathouse,

—whatever his name is over there—say that there is an awful monster in this lake sometimes. It has a long neck, and head like a snake, and breathes fire, I guess, and,—"

"Don't Betty!" cried Cathalina, "you give me the shivers and it's too glorious this afternoon. Did Mickey say we couldn't go out beyond the breakwater?"

"Yes; and it's on the printed rules, too."

"All right. Back we go, then." Cathalina carefully turned the boat and started shoreward. "Strike up, Lil, do!"

Lilian, who had her guitar, strummed a few chords, feeling for an easy key, then led off in pathetic tones:—

O, I wish I were a mermaid,
With scales instead of clo'es,
I'd float upon the billows,
Where no one ever goes!
I'd comb my hair and sing of love,
And bat my sea-green eyes,—
O,—I wish I were a mermaid
Beneath the blue lake skies!
Mermaid!
Mermaid!
Slipp'ry, fishy mermaid!
O,—

I wish I were a mermaid,
Beneath the blue lake skies!

O, I wish I were a mermaid,
I'd never read a book,
But hold a pretty mirror
And at my beauty look!
I'd rest me in a coral cave,
Or swim where Neptune rides,—
O,—
I wish I were a mermaid
To cleave the foaming tides!
Mermaid!
Mermaid!
Slipp'ry, fishy mermaid!—
O,—
I wish I were a mermaid,
Beneath the blue lake skies."

"That awful minor tune, Lil," laughed Betty. "Did you make up the words, too?"

Lilian only nodded assent, having no other means of reply with fingers and voice both engaged. Betty joined with the rest, earnestly wishing to be mermaids, and in fine style they glided up to the little dock where watchful Mickey helped them out and tied up the boat.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GHOST PARTY.

GREYCLIFFE "mysteries" had long since ceased to interest our girls. Isabel had lost her concern about the "Woman in Black" and the "mysterious" girl had been swallowed up with the rest into the busy life of the school. Her name had proved simple enough. "Miss Louise Holley, O, isn't she jolly?" rhymed Betty, rather satirically; but the new girl had laid aside her attitude of distance and tried to make herself agreeable to the other girls. Like Cathalina, she recited irregularly with the Academy and Collegiate girls, was in Cathalina's class in literature, recited in Senior Academy Latin with Lilian and belonged to the bird club which included both Hilary and Cathalina. The girls wondered about her age, as girls do, and Cathalina occasionally caught the resemblance to "somebody" which had puzzled her from the first. "It isn't connected with a pleasant feeling, girls, but I can't tell why and I'm sure it isn't fair to this nice girl to think of it."

"She was probably sore over things at first," said Isabel.

The conclusion was that Miss Holley was about eighteen or nineteen years old and was "back" in some of her studies. She kept to herself quite a

little, but was often found in the groups of Collegiate girls. From the single room on the first floor she had been moved to one not far from the little suite occupied by Isabel and Avalon, though her room was on a different hall. Occasionally she would call in one or the other of these girls to hook up a dress or do some little thing for her and reward them liberally with candy, fruit or nuts. Isabel was an independent little thing and did not like it much. "Let her get some of the *real* little girls to do things!" she growled.

"Why, Isabel, I don't think that's kind!"

"Well, Avalon, you don't notice my not wanting to do things for other people, do you? But she's so overbearing. I hate to be bossed, but I s'pose it *is* wicked."

"I don't mind; and she's always been so pleasant to me. I feel so sorry about her father. Isn't it funny she hasn't any picture of him in her room?"

"That's so. I never thought of it before,—but she hasn't a sign of a photograph around."

"I suppose it makes her feel too bad. I've found out by this time that all girls aren't alike."

"You don't mean it! What a philosopher!" Cathalina, overhearing the last remark, joined the two younger girls.

"Don't you make fun of me, Cathalina V. B. I heard you say almost the same thing the other day. Besides, anybody might have noticed it."

There was a rustic seat near the corner of Greycliff Hall on the side of the grove, and there Avalon, Isabel and Cathalina waited the approach of Hilary and Lilian, who came swinging tennis racquets. It was so lovely out of doors on these evenings after dinner that campus, beach and woods were always sprinkled with these living flowers of spring till the study bell rang. Hammocks were up, and freshly painted swings had come out of winter quarters.

Hilary dropped upon a grassy seat and waved an answer to Eloise who now called and came running over the campus, her hands full of the violets which she had been gathering. "O, girls, you're all invited to a Ghost Party tonight.

"A 'Ghost Party'! repeated Hilary. "That sounds interesting,—and what may a ghost party be?"

Isabel sprang to her feet and began an exaggerated display of shivering, her teeth chattering, chin wobbling and eyes as big as saucers. "Who's got my golden ar-rr-rrm?" she wailed.

"Ha! The Woman in Black!" added Hilary. "That's about the way you looked, Isabel, when you thought you saw her."

"When I *did* see her, you mean. Who's giving the party?" Isabel asked of Eloise, and turning to Hilary, again continued, "Say no more, fair maid! I'm awfully ashamed of being afraid that time. I hope my brothers never hear of it."

"Grace and I are giving the party. We just thought it up."

"Where'll it be?"

"In our rooms,—well, different places. It's *very* mysterious."

"How can we?" asked Cathalina. "It's almost time for the bell now, and I've got ooodles of work to do tonight."

"After study hours. If I can I'll get permission for a midnight feast. If I can't, come around for a little while between study hours and lights out anyhow. Grace has a lovely cake from home and she is over at the janitor's now, engaging his wife to make sandwiches and lemonade for us. I'm going to see if we can't sit up to have it. It's Friday night —the fatal thirteenth of the month, too—and no school tomorrow, of course, and I haven't asked for a special thing this year. It'll be a pity if I can't have a single party! O, yes, wear a sheet and some sort of a white muslin mask,—just holes to breathe, talk and see through, and better wear white gloves or cover up your hands some way, 'cause we'd recognize your hands, you know. And think up the most scary ghost story you know to tell when you join the magic circle by moonlight! Isabel, you'll have to think up something besides the woman in black. I'll send you all word if we can have it. If we can, come in your ghostly garb at ten bells!"

"Won't it be fun!"

"Elo' ought to ask the 'mysterious' girl to a ghost party."

"O, it'll just be our bunch, I think," said Isabel, with much pride in belonging to it! "Why should she ask Louise Holley? She's older, and then we just called her 'mysterious' at first."

"I'm not so sure that there isn't something queer about her," said Hilary, creating quite an impression; for Hilary was regarded as very "level-headed." "After being so snippy to Cathalina at first, she has been in to see her a number of times lately, and hinted very broadly after hearing about my visit that she would 'so enjoy New York'. She asks such funny questions, and shuts up like a clam about herself,—of course we haven't asked anything after the first things one would naturally ask at school, and got snubbed for them!"

A smothered sneeze from around the corner made the girls stop talking and look at each other.

"Somebody's been listening," whispered Cathalina.

"Trying to find out about our party! I hope she hears a lot of good about herself," promptly and pertly spoke Isabel, the last quite loudly. Hilary sprang up from the ground and hurried around the corner. But she was too late.

"Whoever it was either skipped out into the grove or whisked into the side door. It's of no use to fol-

low, too many girls everywhere. She'd be strolling along like one of them."

Friday was the accustomed night for the occasional "midnight feast", official name for any sort of affairs after hours. Privileges of this kind were granted only to girls of good standing in both character and lessons at Greycliff. As Eloise qualified in both lines she had no difficulty in securing the desired permission. "Be quiet, though," she was admonished. "O, it's an especially quiet party," and Eloise laughed to think of the ghostly plans. With such assurance, Miss Randolph dismissed Eloise with a smile.

Cathalina and Hilary, on reaching their suite after the study bell rang, plunged into lessons with determination.

"I feel like letting down on Friday, said Hilary, "but if I do, I don't get through. (I'm a natural poet, Cathalina.) Saturday always has so many things and Saturday night I can hardly ever study."

"Yes; I've noticed that, too," returned Cathalina

Time flew and the work was scarcely done when the gong released Greycliff girls from study for a half hour before the lights must be out.

"We aren't to go till 'ten bells', Grace said, so why not keep on working until we're through?"

"We'd have to explain to Miss Matthews when she looks in to see if we're here."

"I'll do that if you hate to," said Hilary, who

had taken all sorts of disagreeable responsibilities all her life,—for other people.

"We'll lay out the sheets and things, then, and she'll see."

From the halls came the noise of girls running past, getting fresh water, visiting, laughing and talking till once again the gong rang. Miss Matthews did not come. Hilary and Cathalina donned their sheets and made their masks without having to explain why their lights were not out, and by the time they were ready it was nearly "ten bells". "O, *isn't* this fun!" exclaimed Cathalina. "I wonder just what we shall do!"

Ghostly figures glided down the halls to be silently admitted by a sheeted doorkeeper, on presenting the required pass, a slip of paper on which a skull and crossbones were drawn. "O, forgot," whispered one. "I'll run and get it." "O, no you needn't," replied the kind ghost at the door. "It was just for fun."

Eloise and Grace with Juliet and Pauline now occupied one of the larger suites, and a jolly time they had of it. Tonight the central study room was cleared from obstruction and a circle of cushions made, to which the ghosts were pointed as they entered. Only the moonlight streaming in through the big windows furnished guidance, though occasional flashes of electricity from the hands of some hostess ghost showed the preparation for more light

if necessary. "Do ghosts use flashlights?" queried Avalon. "Remember the will-o'-the-wisps," replied Cathalina.

The circle complete, slips of paper were passed around and a slim white figure took her place in the center of the circle. Reaching to the electric fixture above her, she turned on the light and in the hollow whisper directed the ghosts to print in large letters their names "in life" and pin them on "with a thorn from the Witches' Glen!" Real thorns were offered in a large pin try.

"Within the circle you will find
Other papers to your mind;
Write a good and ghostly verse;
'Spress yourself in language terse."

"That must be Elizabeth Barrett Browning at least!" quoth one ghost.

"Too much like work!" complained another, in a ghostly whisper.

"It doesn't have to rhyme. Write anything you choose. It is supposed to be your message from the Land of Ghosts."

"Do we have to be women?"

"No."

"The names pinned on represented many centuries and countries. Helen of Troy, Cleopatra, Queen Victoria, Mary Queen of Scots, Mrs. Browning, Florence Nightingale, Louise of Prussia, Marie An-

toinette and Xantippe mingled with George Washington, Julius Caesar, Ulysses and other gentlemen of like fame. Five minutes were allowed for the messages, after which cups of "ambrosia" were to be passed for refreshment. The ghost who made the announcements suffered much difficulty in not lapsing into their natural tones. Cathalina was sure that she recognized both Eloise and Juliet. Cathalina had decided to be Xantippe, for she thought the girls would not suspect her choosing that character. With great enjoyment she wrote:

"When on earth, Xantippe, I!
Couldn't bake the worst of pie;
Scolded Socrates,—O my!—
Till he filled the cup,—to die!"

"Each ghost will read her own verse, standing, and may be asked any questions by other ghosts. Remember that your laugh or some motion may betray you! If you are a sad spirit, give a groan as you complete the verse; if a happy spirit, a laugh."

"Suppose you don't know where these ghosts have gone to—what then?"

"Guess at it! If your identity is not guessed before the verses are finished, there will be other tests. The final unmasking,—or unveiling will come just before the feast. Next come the ghost stories in the moonlight."

Several of the girls were discovered in the merri-

ment over the verse and had to write their names under the assumed one on the tag. Then the light was turned off again and ghost stories began. Eloise was in the midst of a thrilling one, "And as she lay there in the moonlight, the French window swung softly open, an icy breeze seemed to enter and a cold hand was placed on her forehead,"—when one of the ghosts gave a little jump, said in a whisper, "Please excuse me a minute," and slipped out of the door.

"Was she scared, do you suppose?" asked Eloise, pausing in her account.

"No; go on,—if she does not come back we'll hunt her up pretty soon."

The stories went on, the girls drawing closer together, but in a few minutes a gentle knock sounded at the door. The ghost nearest reached up and opened it, while Eloise said, "O, you're back all right. I was afraid I had scared you."

"'*Back?*'—no," replied the amazed ghost. "I'm Betty and just came. I s'pose I've just about missed it all!"

"No, but I'm so sorry you've not been here! How *funny!* Who could it have been? Well, come join the magic circle anyway and tell a ghost story."

"I—can't. I'm all out of breath and—" "All right; you next, Di."

"Girls, do you hear it striking twelve?" said Hilary, after some time.

Eloise rose and turned on the light. "All respectable ghosts disappear at the stroke of twelve! Masks off! We're going to put on the sheets again after the eats and have a procession through the halls."

"Better not," said Betty, meaningly. It was done, however, though the shadows did not look particularly inviting after those ghost stories! Even Cathalina and Hilary joined in the ridiculous procession that filed up to the third floor, down the back stairs, out to the porch through a parlor window, down the front steps, out upon the campus and circling the fountain, and then as the voice of the night watchman was heard, scampering into the Hall with tightly gathered robes, back to safety!

"I wish I didn't have such an awful conscience!" said Cathalina. "It spoils half the fun to be perfectly sure that Miss Randolph wouldn't want us to go outdoors!"

"My little conscience troubles me too," admitted Hilary.

* * * * *

At the first opportunity the following day, Betty and Eloise came in with sober faces to see Cathalina and Hilary.

"Listen!" said Eloise, mysteriously. "Betty has something to tell you. She had an adventure last night."

"Girls," said Betty impressively, "never, *never* go out alone after night."

"That advice would certainly suit Miss Randolph."

"Well, Miss Randolph is right! Honestly I never realized till this morning what might have happened. Why, I might have been kidnapped!"

"And please let's keep this to ourselves," continued Betty. "Only Lilian knows it in our suite, and Eloise, and we want to know what you girls think of it all.

"I wanted to finish a problem last night; so I told the girls to go and I would come in a few minutes. I had on the sheet and everything. Pretty soon the door opened a little farther,—the girls had left it ajar—and in flew a big envelope. I had my mind on the problem and didn't 'come to' for a minute, then went over and picked up the envelope. It was addressed to me with a note in it, everything printed in crazy letters. 'Very important. Meet me outside. Back door unlocked. Big oak near the janitor's—have to bring up eats—hurry—don't let the night watchman see you—Ghost Eloise.' I thought Elo' was in a hurry and in a 'funny' humor, ghosts and so forth, and never suspected a thing. I looked out in the hall and saw several girls in sheets going the right way for the party, so I hurried down the back way, wondering where Eloise had gotten a key and why she should mention the night watchman if she had permission to get the eats, as I supposed she had. I was such a dummy!

There was a light at the janitor's house, so I wasn't scared a bit.

"Well, I waited and *waited and* waited! No Eloise, of course. And I was just going to start over to the janitor's when lo and behold the light there went out! I whirled on my heel to go back to the Hall,—and there was a young man walking rapidly toward me out of the grove!

"My sakes, Betty, you take my breath," said Hilary. "Is this a movie?"

" 'Truth is stranger than fiction', Hilary," reminded the absorbed Cathalina.

"Honestly, girls, I was so frightened for a minute that I was *weak,* and couldn't take to my heels as I wanted to! But I saw that he was young and nice looking and well dressed,—and he called, not very loud, 'Is that you, Louise?'

" 'No,' I said, 'it is not'."

" 'O', he said and seemed to be disappointed, so I knew he didn't have any designs on me. Then he told me that he had expected to meet his sister down on the beach, that he came in a motor boat and had something important for her, but came earlier than he had planned and so walked up hoping to meet her. He looked around sort of uncomfortably and said he didn't see how he could wait and something about how silly they were here about hours and rules. I suppose he thought I was a rule-breaker too, and would sympathize.

"Then he asked if I would do him a favor. "If I run down to the boat and get the package—it isn't a large one—would you give it to my sister?'

" 'I don't know who your sister is,' " I said.

" 'It's addressed,' he said and hurried off without waiting for me to say I would or wouldn't, just took it for granted that I would!

"So I waited again—*hours*—and thought I never would get to the party. Finally he came back and apologized for keeping me waiting, said he'd mislaid a letter and gave me a big packet,—looked like letters and papers all tied up. 'Of course you'll not mention this,' he said, and gave me such a look! He 'had me in his power', as the stories say, so I said 'naturally not' in a high and mighty way and walked off. By this time I knew that somebody had played a joke on me and Eloise had never been at the janitor's at all!"

"Did you deliver the packet?"

"Yes; I wish I had waited and given it to Miss Randolph first, but my smart thoughts always come a week or so too late! The package was addressed to Miss Louise Holle, spelled 'le' instead of 'ley' as I had supposed. When I rapped on her door there was no answer, so I tried it, found it unlocked and decided to open it and leave the packet there. I just put it on a chair that I saw near the door. The moonlight shone in on her bed and it was empty. I suppose she had gone out to meet him, maybe to

the beach. I heard a motor boat chugging away as I came through the halls."

"She must have had a nice wait if she missed him," said Hilary.

"Mercy, Betty," exclaimed Cathalina, "it might have been somebody to kidnap you, as you say. Where in the world was the night watchman?"

"O, smoking behind some tree, or asleep on the porch, I suppose," replied Betty, forgetting that she had done her best to keep out of sight, while the prowling visitor had doubtless done the same.

Eloise then told of the ghost who had come without the "skull and crossbones pass", and of the one that left shortly before Betty arrived. "I thought it was the same one coming back, you know. And when we all unmasked, *everybody I had invited was there.* So somebody planned to get Betty out of the way and come herself. Now do you suppose it was Louise?"

"Somebody else may have done it for a joke on Betty or all of us, you remember that sneeze around the corner!"

"The plot thickens," laughed Cathalina. "Did the young man look like Louise?"

"Yes, very much. I think he really is her brother, or some near relative, but why couldn't he come to see her at some decent hour, and inside of Greycliff?"

Nobody could answer that question.

CHAPTER XX.

THE JUNIOR PICNIC.

SOMETIMES a mystery remains one for weeks and months or is never solved, and many a girl at school has had to endure an unjust suspicion; but it was odd how bits of information came to the girls in the next few days, "links in the chain of evidence", as Betty said. "I shall not say one word to Louise about the packet, or ask if she got it! If it *was* Louise, 'Louise of Prussia' and she was at the party, she'll know it was I who brought it. If somebody else played the trick on me, she'll have no means of knowing who it was, for her brother could only tell that it was a girl dressed up as a ghost, and there were about twenty of us. So let her betray herself!" and Betty struck an attitude, one hand waving to high heaven, the other upon her heart.

This was the morning after the ghost party, and while Betty was thus delivering herself to Cathalina, the other girls having scattered, Molly, the colored maid, came in to clean the room. "Does you-all care foh these masks?" she asked, as she held up one from the waste basket which she was about to empty. "Ef yo' doesn't, I'll tek it along to Snowla; she'll like to play with it."

"Why, certainly, Molly," returned Cathalina, "I threw it there."

"Well, ah didn't know. Ah picked one up off'n

the flo' in Miss Holley's room this mawnin' an' she jus' nachelly snatched it out'n ma han', an' tol' me nevah to put anything in the waste basket without askin'."

Betty and Cathalina exchanged glances as they left the room to Molly's care. And as they went down stairs they fell in with Victoria, who asked, "What were you girls saying last night to make Louise Holley so mad at you? I met her coming in the side door with a red face and saying, 'Smarties! I'll get even with them!' I said, 'what's the matter, Louise?' and she said, 'O, nothing,—that Betty!' "

"She had not been with us, and Betty did not say anything that I know of."

"I saw you all together afterwards and I thought maybe she had been with you." Victoria went off in another direction as they all reached the foot of the steps outside.

"There! She *was* listening and thought you said that about her instead of Hilary."

"Seems to me Isabel said something, too. Why I wasn't even there till afterwards! But the girls told me what had been said and about the sneeze they heard."

"Probably she made up her mind to get into the party someway, and when she saw you there after the girls had gone took that chance to fool you."

"O, there is Miss West!" interrupted Betty. Let's ask her to take a row with us."

In a few minutes the three were on the river together, Patricia West glad of the recreation with two such exceptionally nice girls. Moved by some impulse, Betty started in to recount her experience, with all the attendant circumstances. "Of course Patty wouldn't tell," the girls always thought, and in receiving their confidences Miss West often had some difficult questions of ethics and loyalty to decide. "O, Betty!" she exclaimed when Betty came to the scene under the oak tree.

"Don't worry, Miss West,—never again!"

"For any of us," added Cathalina. "What do *you* think, Miss West?"

After a few questions, Miss West considered a moment, then said

"It was her brother, without doubt, for he has been at the Hall. I can see no reason except his own convenience for the late meeting. However, some people just love to be mysterious and do things in an underhand way. It showed a lack of consideration for his sister. I think what he brought her was a package of mail and papers that probably just got through from Germany. He is at the military school. Louise brought in some German papers to Miss Randolph this morning while I happened to be with her, and wanted us to sympathize with their standpoint about the war. Their real name is Von Holle, though in this country they have usually gone by the name of Holle. I know I can trust you girls

not to talk about it,—but Miss Randolph has been quite puzzled, wondering what she ought to do. We are supposed to be neutral, of course, but every human being has passed judgment on the recent deeds of Germany, and with all the talk among the girls Miss Randolph feared that for one thing Louise would be very unhappy here. And she was in quite a state at first. Her father was a Prussian officer and was killed in the first advance through Belgium. He had sent his family to America early in the summer. They used to live here and the children were born here. Their English is perfect, but the mother says 've' for 'we', and has a decidedly foreign accent. She is a public singer, not especially noted. Miss Randolph had to decide so suddenly and they were so insistent, wanting a safe place for Louise while the family was so unsettled that it was finally arranged. I believe if I were you that I would just pass it over and not think about it. But do not follow any crazy plans for breaking rules again. The rules are not made for fun, you know, only to protect you girls."

"I know now," said Cathalina, suddenly, "what that resemblance is. Three years ago when we were in Berlin, there was quite a scene one day,—an officer and some men. Father hurried us away, but I can see yet the officer's angry face as he lifted his sword and struck one of the men. Do you suppose it could have been her father?"

"O, you couldn't assume that, Cathalina. There are many chance resemblances."

Several days afterward, Hilary was kneeling on the floor in her sanctum sanctorum. With her arms on the windowsill, she was looking absently toward the lake and the fleecy white clouds above it, when Cathalina, Betty, Diane, Eloise and Pauline came noisily in.

"Back view of one of Raphael's cherubs!" said Diane in her cheerful voice. "What's the matter, Hilary? Can this be that industrious child who is always up and doing, as Shakespeare says."

" 'Shakespeare'!"

"Well, somebody,—what's the difference?"

"You'll get a high mark in literature, Di, if that's your idea." Hilary laughed as she hopped up briskly. "But to answer your question, I'm worried. Any of you girls know what's the matter with Lilian?"

"No, not I; why?" queried Eloise, while the others shook their heads to indicate their ignorance.

"What do you mean, Hilary; is Lilian sick, or mad, or anything?"

"Anything, probably."

"She isn't sick," said Betty.

"I'm afraid she's mad."

"At you? or more of us? or what?"

Hilary smiled at the questions. "O, at me, I

guess; but I can't imagine what is the matter. She didn't wait for me after English, as she usually does, gave me a cool nod this morning when I met her in the hall after breakfast, and pretended not to see me a little while ago when she was going down to the river with a bunch of girls. I had spoken yesterday of not having lessons this afternoon and we had planned to study together and then take a walk; so I feel sure something is wrong, or else she's just sick of going around with me." Hilary looked forlorn.

"Cheer up, Hilary," said Diane. "Sure you didn't imagine it?"

"O, Hilary isn't a bit touchy, you know, Di,"—this from Hilary's roommate, naturally an authority on that.

"I know, Cathalina. You ask Lil, Betty."

"O, please don't!" begged Hilary. "I count on you girls not to say anything. I don't know myself whether to go and see Lilian or not; I'm not keen on being snubbed, you know. But if I've really done anything, I'll apologize in a minute. I can't understand."

"Wait a day or so," counseled Eloise, "maybe she'll come around all right and tell you herself."

But Lilian did not come near or give Hilary a chance to speak to her. Hilary felt much hurt, but like the conscientious little girl she was, thought she must be partly to blame. After the English

class it was now Myrtle Wiseman who waited for Hilary. She was a gentle, pleasant-voiced girl, full of flattery for Hilary's ability and with a certain attractiveness of her own. Cathalina could not bear her, but was too much of a lady to show it when Myrtle would come to their suite for help on a theme or to borrow something from Hilary. Hilary liked her well enough, except for having seen her cheat in examination, but for that reason preferred not to be intimate with her. However, having been brought up to be helpful to everybody, she was kind and sunny with Myrtle. It never occurred that Lilian might be at all jealous, because Lilian was as generous-hearted as Hilary herself. Hilary had never mentioned the cheating to Lilian, for she had some hesitation about prejudicing one girl against another.

"I shan't enjoy the Junior picnic a bit," remarked Hilary one day to Cathalina, "with Lil acting this way."

"If you hate to go to her room to see her, why don't you write her a note?" suggested sensible Cathalina, "and get the thing explained!"

"She probably wouldn't answer it, and anyway, Cathalina, I haven't done a thing! I suppose I'm getting mad, too, but I don't like to be treated that way without a hint why. If Lilian doesn't want to have anything to do with me she needn't!"

Cathalina was surprised, for Hilary was such a

sensible, kind girl under ordinary circumstances, but she did not know what a sore heart Lilian's defection had given Hilary, who did not understand in the least.

"Never mind, Hilary; the rest of us all love you to pieces. Don't pay any attention to it,—though at this rate you'll never fix it up! We're going to have a beach party tonight right after dinner, and we shall see if Lilian will come. We must talk over the plans for the picnic tonight. Did you know that you are on the refreshment committee?"

"No; going in the launch?"

"Yes. O, you weren't at the meeting, were you? We are going to the Island, going to cook fish or weenies or something,—we ought to make out the menu tonight. Diane said it would be more fun to have the whole crowd together to talk it over. We are just going a little way up the beach tonight, going to have fudge and toast marshmallow, wear our bathing suits and big cloaks, have our committee meeting first, swim next, and then have the candy."

"I wish that old study bell did not ring so early!"

"By the way," Cathalina pointed to the table, "help yourself. Wasn't it nice of Phil to send candy just to his sister? He said he was sending the box to his next best girl. He calls Mother his 'best girl'."

"Aren't they spuzzy! Thank you. It will spoil our 'appertites' for plain fudge, though. Why,

doesn't Philip pay any attention to girls? He has such graceful manners with them that you'd think he'd had experience."

"That is good, Hilary; I'll have to tell Phil that."

"Mercy, no! I know how boys are,—and he'd never speak to me again, perhaps."

"Yes, he would, but I won't repeat it. Yes, Phil is not nearly as old as he seems, but he has had several half-way sweethearts, from Ann Maria to a nice girl that was visiting one of our friends not so very long ago. But Phil is too interested in boy affairs to be at all silly about girls. Boys have such good times, you know. He wrote all of one page!" Cathalina held out the manly scrawl for inspection. "Campbell wants to be remembered to you, Phil says, and he also sends his regards. Campbell says your are the 'foxiest girl he knows'."

"I'm much obliged to Campbell. I suppose, at least, that he intends that as a compliment. He was real nice to me, and is such a 'good looker', as Gordon says."

"Campbell is one of my nicest cousins."

Final plans for the picnic were made at the beach party. Lilian did not come down until late, but was as jolly as ever, avoiding any special conversation with Hilary. Everybody was happy at the prospect of the fun. "We want it to be a success," said Eloise, anxiously. She was chairman of the general committee.

"O, it can't help it,"—this in Helen's pretty voice. "Just to get out in the Greycliff would be enough."

The day of the picnic was warm and sunny, the lake all sparkles. Against the big [illegible] at the foot of the cliff the spray dashed and foamed, but there was only the fresh morning breeze, with no signs of storm. The gulls were as busy as ever. A kingfisher rattled his noisy way at the mouth of the river and a white-winged tern dived near as the little Greycliff, comfortably full, chugged its way through the waves and left behind its churning wake.

Patricia West, the favorite young English teacher, was chaperone. Miss Randolph had suggested Dr. Carver, since that lady had not yet received the compliment of being asked to chaperone any of the picnics or parties. The committee did not utter a word, but glanced at each other in such dismay that Miss Randolph threw back her head and laughingly asked, "Well, whom *do* you want?"

"Miss West!" said they all in concert.

And Miss West it was. Cathalina had remained to whisper, "I'm sorry if you really wanted Dr. Carver to go. She would enjoy it."

"No, child; if the girls dislike her, as I fear they do, she would have a hard time on this trip and it would spoil their fun."

At the Island, half an hour's ride away, the girls

and their chaperone were unloaded, with all the picnic baskets and other impedimenta. The Greycliff then departed to go back to Greycliff dock, whence it was to take out several picnic parties that day to different points on the lake shore.

"Will they go after the crowds in the same order tonight?" Hilary asked Miss West.

"Not quite. The Freshmen are to get in before dinner, the Sophomores later, and we may go home by moonlight."

"How fine! I wonder how it happened that there are so many picnic parties today."

"There are so few Saturdays left, you know. The Greycliff will be busy every Saturday that offers fine weather."

All the girls helped carry the lunch up the shore to a shady green spot on the bluffs, where some beautiful trees stretched protecting branches and there was a fine view of the mainland shore. Perry, a stout young fellow who was one of Mickey's chief assistants and who was to remain with the girls, toiled up the ascent with the heavier loads.

"Out on that rock," said Juliet, pointing, "is where we build our fires, Cathalina. Let's gather our wood and stuff now and have it all ready. No green wood, girls!" she called as they scattered to find material for the fire. A little oven of stones had been built by former picnic parties and needed only a little repairing. Perry was fixing some fishing

tackle and Diane called to him as they all started away, "If you hear us scream, come a-running to rescue us!" And grinning Perry promised that he would. "There will probably be nothing more dangerous that a garter snake," laughed Juliet.

The Island, as it was called, had only one stretch of beach, where the party had landed and where bathing or swimming was safe. About the rest of its circumference, steep cliffs rose from the water and were especially high where the island was separated from the mainland by a narrow channel, through which the water rushed and boiled as the waves came in or retreated. There was one pretty descent where steps had been cut in the rock and led down to a broad platform and a tiny cave, called by the girls from Kentucky "Mammoth Cave," because "it wasn't."

Some of the girls had brought field glasses and found quiet spots where they could watch the birds, or strolled by a little trail through the trees and bushes in the center of the island. Others hunted wild flowers and several sketched a little, sketches intended more for their diaries and "stunt books" than for artistic purposes. Two or three lazily stretched out on blankets high upon the bluff, to read or watch the sky and water.

"I am so glad that we were the earliest party to come out," said Cathalina to Betty Barnes. "Isn't it funny that I don't want to sketch these days? I

just want to tramp around and see things. Diane said that there are some eggs on those rocks over there. Let's go and see. I wonder if the gulls and terns nest here."

"They say so," answered Betty. "Come on, Hilary, have you seen the place where the gulls nest?"

"No." Hilary came running, her field glass in hand, the leather case bobbing about her shoulders. Myrtle came hurrying to catch up with Hilary. Through bushy tangles and over rocks the girls climbed to where several others, Lilian among them, were trying to see the eggs, placed with wisdom in the most inaccessible spot. Hilary braced herself behind a little tree and was focusing her glass when her foot slipped and she slid out over the cliff, losing her hold on the tree, but clutching at the roots and bushes.

"Run, Juliet,—call Perry!" screamed Lilian, running toward Hilary. But sturdy Pauline was first, and knelt, throwing one arm around the young tree and giving her other hand to the white-faced Hilary. "Hold on to me, Lil, and I'll keep Hilary up!" Lilian, as white as Hilary, held Pauline, while the little tree creaked and swayed.

Myrtle had thrown herself face down on the ground and was sobbing.

"Hush this minute, Myrtle!" said Cathalina. "You'll scare Hilary. We're going to get you up all right, Hilary!" Delicate little Cathalina stretched

herself full length by Pauline and reached both hands to Hilary's.

"I'll only pull you over," whispered Hilary, her right hand grasped by the determined Pauline, and her left seeking a precarious hold on the frail supports that were now almost torn away.

"No, you won't. Come, hold my feet, girls, and don't let go and I'll take Hilary's other hand,—sit on me or anything!"

The other girls who had been almost paralyzed by the sudden accident, followed Cathalina's directions and assured Hilary that when Cathalina and Pauline were tired they would take their places. There was no foothold for Hilary, for the cliff sloped back under its edge, and the girls were not quite strong enough to draw Hilary's weight up nor dared to risk any experiments. But just as they thought their arms would leave their sockets and their heads were swimming with the effort, Perry came running and crashing through the bushes, bringing a life preserver, a rope and his own strong arms. In a jiffy Hilary was up and over the edge and in the arms of the girls, who laughed and cried together.

"I say, Miss Hilary, you're no featherweight! When I heard that screamin', I grabbed the life preserver and broke into a run, plumb sure one of y' was drowndin'!"

"Makes me think of between halves at a ball

game," cried Juliet who was rubbing Pauline's arm. Hilary lay on the grass as far as possible from the edge of the cliff and rested with her head in Lilian's lap. No explanations were necessary. Friendship was renewed without them. "I'm not strained as much as you'd think, girls," said Hilary. "First, you see, I had hold of the tree, then as I slipped from that I held to the little things and got my elbows on the edge. But if Pauline had not gotten me just when she did,—my, I could hear that boiling surf down there and I tried not to imagine the rocks!" Cathalina declared that her arms were all right, and presently Hilary jumped up as lively as ever. "You girls and Perry saved me, so it has not spoiled our day. Come on; I'm hungry. I'm sorry I scared you all so.—O, my glass!" Hilary looked at the girls in dismay. Cathalina came up and patted Hilary's cheek. "Don't feel bad, Hilary, you can have mine! I heard the glass go smash down there—but let's be glad it wasn't you!" For a minute Hilary hesitated. That field glass was such a treasure. Then Hilary was herself again. "No use, spilled milk; Gordon would tell me to 'be a sport'; I'll rent a glass till the bird study is over."

Only Perry, who followed the girls with sober face, realized fully what might have happened to turn the happy day into tragedy.

A fire had been started on the bluff; something savory was simmering in pans and there was much

spreading of sandwiches and opening of pickle and olive jars. Cathalina had secured from an enterprising lady of Greycliff Heights, home-made rolls, jelly and jam, doughnuts and potato chips. Various girls had brought their own contributions as well. "Wouldn't our menu be a scream if it were printed?" said one. As usual there was more than enough, though it had been necessary to provide for two meals. "And we'll be hungry, you know, girls," had been said so much that it became a joke.

After the first meal there were games, and wading or swimming. The athletic Juliet and Pauline were learning to crochet and looked quite domestic as they bent above their work. Pauline learned a new stitch, but found that her arm was too lame to accomplish much. Swimming, alas, was out of the question for either her, Hilary or Cathalina. Even the intellectual Miss West was tatting, while everybody had raptures over Eloise's beautiful embroidery. Hilary and Lilian wandered off to a shady spot not far from the beach, where the water lapped quietly and cunning little sandpipers ran along the moist sands. Later, after an earnest and evidently satisfactory conversation, they again joined the main company, most of whom were tired of roaming about.

As the moon came up, the breeze died away to a soft breath from the South and the lake was unusually calm. Sitting in groups, the girls told sto-

ries or chatted until the launch arrived. By moonlight in the Greycliff the Greycliff songs or latest ragtimes were flung to the evening mists, till the Junior picnic was over and the big hall once more received its children.

"How's your arm, Polly?" asked Hilary, as in kimono and slippers she appeared in Pauline's door, while the penetrating odor of liniment made everybody on the floor think of athletics.

"Fine," replied Pauline; "I'll be asleep before you get to your room."

"Goodnight, then," and Hilary came over to give Pauline a good hug. "It's terribly early, but I believe I could sleep if the whole hall were prancing by!" With this, Hilary scampered home to find Cathalina already asleep and to slip into her own comfortable nest after sending up the grateful prayer which had been in her heart since morning.

CHAPTER XXI.

DREAMS AND FAREWELLS.

With arms about each other's waists, Cathalina Van Buskirk and Elizabeth Barnes were walking slowly in the winding path through Greycliff Wood. Cathalina's sunny locks were close to Betty's dark ones.

"Just think!" Betty was saying, "I won't see you for three months!"

"I wish you could go home with me this summer. Can't you?"

"Not possibly. Mother has not been well and I am needed at home. She has been terribly worried, too, over Aunt Dorothy's family. Aunt Dorothy married a Canadian and they live up in Toronto,—but the two oldest boys are both fighting in France. Dick is wild to go too; he hears from the boys once in a while. Father doesn't worry, but Mother is sure that we shall get into the war some time."

"How old is your brother?"

"Dick is almost twenty."

They had reached the place where three paths diverged, one to the left going deeper into the woods behind Greycliff, another leading down into the vine-clad ravine near the river, and a third winding to the right and leading out to the front of the grove, where a grassy bluff overlooked the beach. A chorus of gay calls came from the trees there.

"Whoo-hoo, Betty, wasn't that an easy quiz in French?" Eloise waved her handkerchief at Betty, who hurried up the path with Cathalina and dropped down by the other girls. "I haven't a single examination now, all through! It's goodbye lessons for at least twelve weeks!"

"O, Eloise!" responded Cathalina joyously, "I'm so glad, too, that the old exams are over,—yet I do hate to go and leave you girls."

"Well, we're going too, not left behind."

"Yes, but you see I don't know whether I'm coming back or not!"

"You better had!" said Betty.

"Aren't you going to ask to come?" Diane looked surprised.

"Yes, of course."

"Well, that's all that's necessary, isn't it?"

"O, you don't know my father and mother if they think something's good for me!" Cathalina shook her head in some doubt. "But I'm sure they will admit that this plan to have me come here has turned out wonderfully! And *I* would not have missed it for anything! Just *think* of not knowing you girls!" Cathalina spoke earnestly and sincerely, but created a laugh and exclamations of "How awful!"

"Neither would I," said Helen,—"but look at Hilary and Lilian together again!" she exclaimed, pointing to where the two girls in question were walking up from the beach and swinging hands in the best of spirits.

"That isn't Hilary, is it?" demurred Eloise, looking around a tree.

"Yes,—see her red tie and hair ribbon?"

"Other girls have red ties and hair ribbons."

"That may be, but I know Hilary's middy and her walk," Helen assured the girls.

"They've made up since the picnic, or, really, that day," said Cathalina.

"Haven't you noticed them together?" asked Betty.

"What was the matter, then, if they don't mind our knowing. Hilary has not happened to be in the suite and we did not say one word to Lilian about it from the first."

"Hilary said I might tell you girls, or of course I would not say anything. It was all that Myrtle Wiseman. I couldn't have supposed any girl could, *but I think she must have told lies!*" Cathalina's voice dropped to a whisper on the last words, and her blue eyes widened in her earnestness, while the girls laughed out.

"You know," she apologized, "in polite society one hardly charges people with such things. I can't remember all about it, but you know how Myrtle tried to go around with Hilary all the time. It seems that she was jealous of Lilian, and Lil told Hilary afterwards that she guessed she was jealous of Myrtle or she wouldn't have been so taken in. And Myrtle told a lot of things and twisted what Hilary really did say, and Lil believed it and—" Cathalina was forced to stop and take breath.

"She told Lilian that she wouldn't think a girl would 'stick in where she wasn't wanted,' that it was perfectly plain that Hilary was just being polite to her and that Hilary had said she didn't care to be so intimate with one girl. She did not say it in just

that way, but in little mean hints and sly ways. What Hilary did say was in answer to some question of Myrtle's about our corridor crowd—that she thought it nice to have ever so many friends and not only one or two.

"There were one or two thoughtless things that Hilary did just then and they seemed to prove what Myrtle said true. So Lilian was nearly killed over it, she said and just couldn't act decent. What was the use of asking Hilary, she said, because Hilary was too kind to tell her the truth! So she was hoping that Hilary would ask about it, and Hilary was hurt and wondering what was the matter.

"I knew that Myrtle was deceitful, for we've all seen her use a pony in Latin and copy in algebra,—but this was a regular scheme! It was simply—"

"Dee-spisable!" added Isabel, who had appeared from somewhere in time to hear Cathalina's explanation. She curled down and put her head in Cathalina's lap. "'Sweet Cathalina, dear Cathalina, My love for thee shall never, never do-yi!' Listen, girls, did you ever hear my adaptation of that sweet little ditty just out (interrogation point drawn by Isabel's finger in the air), entitled 'Evaline'?—I mean 'My Cathaline':

O, Cathaline (O, Cathaline),
My Cathaline (My Cathaline), ...
Sweeter to me than the honey to the bee,

I love-a you, say you love-a me!
Meet me in the shade of the old apple tree-ee,
Kitty, Kathy Cothy, Cathali-ine!"

"Silly," said Cathalina, stroking Isabel's curls.

Lilian and Hilary leaped up the steep way that was always the shortest route to the Hall. The girls kept still till they had topped the bank, and then greeted them with the old, "What's the matter with Hilary?—She's all right! Who's all right?—Hilary!" Making like inquiry into Lilian's condition, they found her "all right", too. As the friends were still sensitive about the recent misunderstanding, they only nodded and smiled and joined the circle.

"Is this a final meeting of some sort?" asked Lilian.

"Just a happen-so," replied Eloise. "We really ought to have one more good old fudge or beach party, but nobody has time. I've begun packing. My, how do we get so much stuff? I don't know what to do with it!"

"I saw the old spring wagon come up a while ago with a load of empty boxes that I suppose some of the girls have ordered for their things."

"That makes me think,—I ordered one!" Isabel scrambled to her feet. "See you all tonight to say goodbye!"

"We must go too, Diane," said Helen, jumping

up and pulling the lazy Diane, who complained that just when she got nicely settled Helen always wanted her to do something!

"I've been packing all day, too, more or less," and Diane made a pitiful face as she pretended to be dragged along by the lively Helen.

"Yes, girls, said Helen, looking back, "her packing has consisted in pulling everything out of the bureau drawers 'onto' the floor, and if we don't get to work we shan't be able to get to bed tonight without crushing some art treasure or other under foot! She has her hand-painted china in a pasteboard box under her bed and I've noticed that it's awful rickety lately. You all can't imagine the time I have. Talk about 'Northern enterprise'!" All this in Helen's pretty drawl with the r's omitted in Southern fashion. "Come on, Eloise, and help!"

"All right," and pretty Eloise hopped up too.

At last, only Cathalina, Hilary, Betty and Lilian were left. The afternoon sun cast long shadows among the trees. Somewhere down in the ravine a wood thrush was singing his flute-like song. The girls listened and were silent. The waves softly foamed about the rocks afar off, and the little Greycliff was coming home with some last party of girls.

"Haven't we had a good year, girls? I'm so grateful to Aunt Hilary for sending me to this lovely place."

"I did not want to come at all," said Cathalina,

"but it's hard to imagine it now. O, I want to be and do so much some time!"

"That is what Father and Mother said they hoped my school life would do for me,—make me want to 'be and do'," said Betty. "And what wonderful talks Miss Randolph has given us in chapel!"

"Yes," said Lilian. "Do you remember her talk on 'I slept and dreamed that life was beauty,—I woke and found that life is duty'?—or something like that, I'm not very sure in quoting!"

"I do believe it's beauty," Cathalina remarked thoughtfully, "but she did make it very clear that it couldn't be beautiful if duty did not come first. I never had any plans before, except to study art and have a good time, but I almost want to go to college, now."

"I can," said Hilary, happily, "if nothing happens."

"I want to be an illustrator," spoke Betty, "and maybe write my own things to illustrate, too. But don't tell anybody else; it's all a secret, because maybe I can't do it."

"O, we'll study together, Betty!" Cathalina clasped her hands over her knee. "You'll draw and write and I'll paint and 'sculp'. What do you want to do, Lilian?"

"I want to sing!" cried Lilian, who had a sweet bird in her throat. "But Father says I must have a 'broad foundation' first, and they never let me sing

very much, only let me take lessons this year because Professor Marchant was especially interested and promised to take such care of my infant voice! Maybe it won't amount to anything anyway, so I may take up domestic science next year. If music fails me, I may be able to cook for some nice man. That isn't original, girls. I heard one of the Collegiates say that the other day."

"Father says," said Cathalina, "that to make a home is the most wonderful thing in the world, and since men can't, women ought to be 'proud of the distinction'. You ought to hear him and Aunt Katherine when she is on her 'high horse'! She says that housekeeping takes more brains and patience than anything else, and the better trained your mind is the better you'll do it."

"I believe she's right," Hilary added. "I know Mother puts all her brains and strength into being a minister's wife, along with taking care of the kiddies. I don't think I shall ever marry." At Hilary's solemn air, the girls laughed merrily.

"I know one young man," Cathalina said teasingly, "who thinks Hilary the 'foxiest girl' he knows."

"Sh-sh! Cathalina Van Buskirk!"

"O, who? who, Cathalina?" asked Betty and Lilian. "Your brother?"

"No, though Phil certainly does like old Hilary! Well, I won't tease, Hilary. Ask her, girls." But Hilary shook her head.

"I'm always seeing myself," continued Lilian, with an amused smile, "standing gracefully on a platform and all fluffy with laces and glittering with jewels and decorations. Then I sing, while everybody is breathless or in tears, you know, and when I stop, there is a thunder of applause. They're all wild about the 'glorious creature', and then I come out and bow, again and again, and carry off loads of roses, and get a thousand dollars a night!"

"Greedy creature! Will you sing at our church for nothing?"

"Yes, indeed, Hilary, out of friendship for you; and you'll put in the Saturday paper that the famous prima donna is to sing at the morning service. Then I will say, "O, no, Dr. Lancaster, I could not accept anything for the exquisite pleasure of singing to your congregation!"

"Listen to Lil's big words! How noble!" murmured Hilary. "Thanks."

"I'm not worrying," said Betty, "about those far away days, but I do love to dream about what I want to do most; and don't you remember?—Miss Randolph said that if we didn't have dreams we might never try to make anything great come true."

"O, yes;" answered Cathalina, "but after all, I'm glad that we're just girls now, and coming back, if nothing happens to prevent, to dear old Greycliff."

THE END.

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